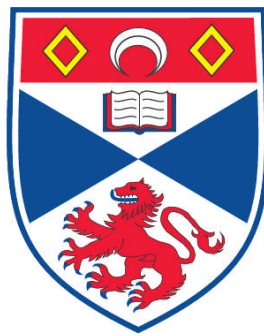


**THE TRIUMPH OF GOD IN CHRIST : DIVINE WARFARE IN THE
ARGUMENT OF EPHESIANS**

Timothy G. Gombis

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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THE TRIUMPH OF GOD IN CHRIST: DIVINE
WARFARE IN THE ARGUMENT OF EPHESIANS

By

Timothy G. Gombis, B.S., M.Div., Th.M.

A thesis submitted in completion of requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

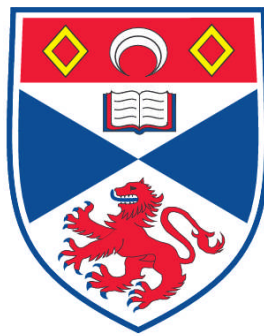
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Abstract of Thesis

In this thesis I argue that the letter of Ephesians contains a coherent argument and that this argument is animated by the ideology of divine warfare. This ideological tool was utilized throughout the ancient world to assert and defend the cosmic supremacy of national deities, and appears throughout the Old Testament in texts that declare the exalted status of Yahweh over all other gods and over the forces of chaos that threaten creation. This ideology is applied to Ephesians with the result that what many regard as the central portion of the letter—Ephesians 2—contains a complete cycle of this mythological pattern. Here, within a context of praise and worship (1:1-19), the cosmic Lordship of Christ is asserted (1:20-23) and the triumphs of God in Christ over the powers that rule the present evil age are elaborated (2:1-22). God in Christ has triumphed over the powers that hold humanity captive to death by raising believers to life and seating them in the heavenlies with Christ. Further, Christ triumphs over the powers and their divisive effects within humanity by creating a new unified humanity that shares in the life of God in Christ by the Spirit. I then attempt to demonstrate that reading Ephesians through this lens provides satisfying solutions to a number of problems in subsequent sections of the letter. The ‘autobiographical’ remarks in Eph 3:2-13 are not intended as an apostolic defense, but rather are an explanation of how Paul’s imprisonment, which would appear to be a devastating argument against the cosmic Lordship of Christ, actually serves to epitomize and reinforce that exalted status. I also argue that the difficult quotation of Psalm 68 in Eph 4:8 finds a satisfying solution through the application of divine warfare ideology. Finally, I argue that this reading demonstrates that the two halves of Ephesians are integrally related—that the exhortatory portion is a call to the New Humanity to engage in divine warfare against the evil powers, embodying the triumph of God in Christ in their corporate life.

Acknowledgments

I am blessed to have been able to complete this thesis in the collegial environment of St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews. The postgraduate community in St. Andrews proved an ideal setting for study of the Scriptures and I have benefited immensely from relationships with fellow postgraduates. My experience, and that of my family, would have been far poorer were it not for the rich friendships we enjoyed here.

I am also profoundly grateful for the supervision of my work by Dr. Bruce Longenecker, whose careful reading and critical interaction have made this thesis a much better work than it would have been otherwise. The gruelling process of writing a Ph.D. thesis brings countless opportunities for despair and frustration, but Bruce's oversight and well-timed encouragements made this a rewarding experience. I am blessed to have had him as my *Doktorvater*. Thanks are also due to Professor Richard Bauckham, who supervised my work for a year while Bruce was on sabbatical. His criticisms provoked further thought on several points, saving me from error. It is a privilege to have had my work supervised by two distinguished scholars, and it should go without saying that the fault for any remaining shortcomings is mine.

I am indebted also to the examiners of this thesis, Professor Larry Hurtado of New College, University of Edinburgh, and Professor Philip Esler of St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews, whose thorough analysis and searching criticisms have improved its quality.

Portions of my work on Ephesians have been published elsewhere: 'Being the Fullness of God in Christ by the Spirit: Ephesians 5:18 in its Epistolary Setting', *Tyndale Bulletin* 53 (2002), 259-71; 'Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004), 403-18; 'Ephesians 3:2-13: Pointless Digression, or Epitome of the Triumph of God in Christ?' *Westminster Theological Journal* 66 (2004), 313-23; 'Cosmic Lordship and Divine Gift-Giving: Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8', *Novum Testamentum* (forthcoming, 2005); 'A Radically New Humanity: The Function of the *Haustafel* in Ephesians', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (forthcoming, 2005).

During the four years it took to complete this thesis, my family was supported financially by my parents, Dr. Leon and Kathryn Gombis. This is no insignificant gift, and I'm thankful for their profound expression of kindness and love.

An academic thesis is produced amid the rough and tumble of everyday life, and my children, Madeline, Jacob and Riley, have done well to bring Ephesians out of the study and into the practice of being a family. Their joy and love of life bring great delight to their parents, and together we thank God in Christ that these four years have been the best of our lives.

Finally, I could not adequately express what my wife, Sarah, means to me, nor how grateful I am for her. She provided constant encouragement to me throughout this work and was eager to share in my joy over the Divine Warrior and of the riches contained in Ephesians. Together we have learned how God in Christ triumphs in real life as we endured a series of painful tragedies, and I have come to see more clearly how wonderfully blessed I am to be married to Sarah. I dedicate this work to her, my friend and lover.

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CHAPTER 1

THE TRIUMPH OF GOD IN CHRIST: DIVINE WARFARE IN THE ARGUMENT OF EPHESIANS

Introduction

The Letter of Ephesians finds itself in an odd situation. While it has held an esteemed position in the history of the Christian church and has been a rich resource for Christian theology through the centuries, it has been a puzzle for NT scholars and has endured some rather unflattering descriptions. According to John Muddiman, 'No letter of Paul is so confused and confusing in its form and structure'.¹ For J. H. Roberts, 'In view of the many questions that still await an acceptable solution the enigma of Ephesians remains'.² Nils Dahl calls Ephesians 'sublime yet elusive',³ and Edgar Goodspeed refers to it as the 'waterloo of commentators', since it invariably 'baffles them'.⁴

This state of affairs in Ephesians scholarship has come about because of the difficulty involved in discerning the internal coherence of the letter. While scholars agree on the presence of major themes within the letter, such as corporate unity, the people of God and cosmic Christology, the manner in which they are integrated into an argument remains a mystery. If there is anything approaching a consensus on this matter, it is that the letter is largely a reinterpretation of the essence of Pauline theology for a new generation of Christians. For example, Michel Bouttier claims that Ephesians has a two-fold purpose:

réinterpréter globalement le message paulinien, à partir d'une conviction reçue, face à une situation neuve; et incorporer dans le paulinisme des traditions qui avaient mûri dans d'autres milieux que ceux qui étaient sous l'influence directe de l'apôtre.⁵

As such, Ephesians does not contain an argument, but is rather a pastiche of Pauline traditions woven together by a Pauline disciple.⁶ According to Michael Gese,

¹ Muddiman 2001, 7.

² Roberts 1993, 104.

³ Dahl 1986, 38.

⁴ Goodspeed 1933, 15.

⁵ Bouttier 1991, 24. Muddiman's proposal is a variation of this viewpoint. He argues that Ephesians is a composite document, a re-working of an authentic Pauline letter, which was the epistle to the Laodiceans noted by Marcion, by a disciple of Paul (2001, 2-39).

⁶ Käsemann 1966, 297; Bouttier 1991, 24-28; Schwindt 2002, 46-47; Gnllka 1971, 13-21.

Aus seiner Kenntnis der paulinischen Briefe heraus gelingt dem Verfasser eine *umfassende Gesamtschau* der paulinischen Theologie. Wie wir beobachten konnten, greift er die bei Paulus angelegten unterschiedlichen Tendenzen auf, führt sie zusammen und formt aus ihnen einen in sich geschlossenen Entwurf.⁷

Complicating matters further for those attempting to find a coherent argument is the appearance of works claiming that there is no integral relationship between the two halves of the letter—chapters 1-3 and 4-6. In a recent monograph, Roy Jeal argues that the unity of Ephesians is not found in a thematic or theological coherence, but rather in a rhetorical scheme.⁸ He notes the difficulty in discerning the connection between the usual *narratio* and *argumentatio* portions of the letter and proposes that the coherence of Ephesians consists in its rhetorical classification as a ‘sermon’. In this scenario, the writer is not arguing critically with his readers in a polemical fashion, establishing the theological ground for his paraenesis, but rather attempts to stimulate the sentiments of his readers with appeals to sublime truths held in common (chapters 1-3) in order to persuade them to adopt his recommended course of action (chapters 4-6).⁹

This letter, then, which has been so influential and which has enjoyed a place of such prominence in the Christian tradition has come to be regarded as only barely coherent, and, as a result, has suffered relative neglect in NT scholarship. Recent attempts to situate the letter in a first-century context have proved no help in discerning the argument of its author. A fresh reading, therefore, is needed, one that seeks to determine whether there is a coherent argument within Ephesians, and how this argument unfolds.

In this thesis, I will argue that Ephesians does indeed contain an argument and that it has a tight coherence that binds together the letter’s two halves. When read through the ideology of divine warfare from the ancient world, the argument, in which the writer asserts and elaborates upon the triumph of God in Christ over all competing cosmic forces, emerges into view.

⁷ Gese 1997, 271-72.

⁸ Jeal 2000; cf. also Lincoln 1990, lxxxi.

⁹ Jeal 2000, 48.

The Triumph of God in Christ

In a monograph published in 1997, Thomas Yoder Neufeld documented the utilization of divine warrior typology in Ephesians 6, tracing the trajectory of this tradition from Isaiah 59 to Ephesians 6.¹⁰ In Isaiah 59 Yahweh appears as the Divine Warrior who is preparing to judge his apostate people and warns them to repent. In preparation for coming in his awesome judgment to wage war, he puts on his armor, which consists of his own righteousness, salvation, vengeance and zeal (Isa 59:16-17). This imagery is found also in Wisdom of Solomon—a text dated from the late second century B.C.E. to early in the first century C.E.—and in 1 Thessalonians, indicating that this tradition was familiar and capable of being exploited in various contexts.

Yoder Neufeld devotes the bulk of his study to Ephesians 6:10-20 and demonstrates that the author of Ephesians takes up this tradition and creatively deploys it for his own purposes. Here, the divine warrior is no longer God, but the church, which is engaged in warfare with the powers ruling the present evil age. The call to ‘be strong in the Lord and in the power of his strength’ (6:10) is an exhortation to the corporate church to take up God’s power in order to engage the conflict.¹¹ Further, the church is ‘to “wield the Lord” so to speak, a striking reversal of the usual Divine War tradition where the people function as one of the δύνάμεις of the Divine Warrior’.¹² Just as Yahweh took up his armor to execute divine warfare in Isaiah 59, so here in Ephesians 6, the people of God are called upon to put on that same armor in carrying out the divine warfare to which they are commissioned.

The writer calls on the church, *as the embodiment of the divine warrior*, to assist Paul in his ministry in Eph 6:19-20. Just as Yahweh as the Divine Warrior would come to the aid of his people in the OT, so now the community *as the warrior* is summoned to aid Paul in his struggle. The author of Ephesians asks that the community wield prayer as a weapon and fight on Paul’s behalf that he might be assisted to make known the gospel with boldness (6:19).¹³

¹⁰ Yoder Neufeld 1997; cf. also his commentary on Ephesians, Yoder Neufeld 2002.

¹¹ Yoder Neufeld 1997, 109.

¹² Yoder Neufeld 1997, 115.

¹³ Yoder Neufeld 1997, 146-47; cf. also Yoder Neufeld 2002, 306-10.

Yoder Neufeld's work on the tradition of the divine warrior fully armed from Isaiah 59 to Ephesians 6 demonstrated that the imagery of divine warfare would have resonated with a first-century audience in Asia Minor and that this imagery could be usefully appropriated to speak of the conflict between the people of God and the enemy powers. According to Andrew Lincoln, the dramatic conclusion in Eph 6:10-20 provides a rhetorical climax to the entire letter, and not just to the exhortatory section in 4:17-6:9.¹⁴ Yoder Neufeld's valuable study, along with Lincoln's observation, raise the question of the presence of divine warfare imagery throughout Ephesians, and the extent to which reading the epistle through this lens might prove fruitful in discerning the presence of an argument in the letter and recognizing its overall coherence.

In this thesis, I will argue that reading the letter through the lens of the ideology of divine warfare from the ANE, developed in the OT and utilized throughout the NT, brings to light the argument of Ephesians and reveals its overall coherence. This argument has to do with asserting and defending the triumph of God in Christ over all competing cosmic powers. The writer claims that God has triumphed over the powers ruling the present evil age in raising Christ from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenlies, installing him as Lord over 'all things' (1:20-23). This triumph of God in Christ is then elaborated throughout the remainder of the letter, where the author lists the triumphs of God in Christ (2:1-22) and notes how Paul, as the servant of the cosmic Lord Christ, participates in this triumph even while his earthly situation appears less than triumphant (3:2-13). The writer also explains how the church is to participate in this triumph and how the people of God play a strategic role in the Divine Warrior's program of advertising his triumph to a cosmic audience (4:1-6:9).

In Chapter 2, I will develop the pattern of divine warfare from the ANE. This ideological tool was utilized throughout the ancient world to assert and substantiate the supremacy of a national deity, and it followed a typical pattern. A deity could rightly be worshiped as the supreme sovereign over all creation on the basis of his/her victory in conflict with other deities, or over the forces of chaos. On the basis of the deity's supremacy, (s)he had the right to have a temple built in

¹⁴ Lincoln 1995, 99-114.

his/her honor, to which the deity's people would gather in worship and celebration.

In the third chapter, I will discuss the pervasive sense of enslavement to cosmic powers found throughout the ancient world. The author of Ephesians asserts and defends the cosmic lordship of Christ over the 'powers and authorities', but how would such language have been understood? Indeed, would it have been understood at all? We will demonstrate in this chapter that the argument of Ephesians would have resonated across all traditions in the ancient world because of this pervasive sense that earthly life was determined and governed by various supra-human powers.

I will apply the pattern of divine warfare to Ephesians 1:1-2:22 in the fourth chapter, demonstrating that reading this passage—regarded as '*die Mitte des ganzen Epheserbriefes*'¹⁵—through the lens of this ideological tool reveals the writer's rhetorical strategy. Within a context of praise and worship of the triumphant Lord Christ (1:1-19), the writer's concern is to assert the lordship of Christ over the powers and authorities that rule the present evil age (1:20-23). This lordship is vindicated by a rehearsal of the triumphs of God in Christ throughout Ephesians 2, where God in Christ has freed people from bondage under the powers, raising people from death and seating them with Christ in the heavenlies (2:1-10). Further, he has overcome the deep division within humanity created by the law. The evil powers hijacked God's good gift of the Mosaic Law and perverted it into a source of alienation, bitterness and division. In his death, Christ conquered this enmity and bitterness by uniting both Jew and Gentile in Christ in one New Humanity (2:11-16). Because of these triumphs, Christ has the right to build his temple, which he has done in creating the church, the place where God in Christ dwells by the Spirit (2:19-22).

In the fifth chapter, I will demonstrate how this reading accounts for the enigmatic digression (Eph 3:2-13) found in Ephesians 3, which interrupts the letter's second prayer report (3:1, 14-21). The writer's digression is necessary because he must answer a potential objection to his announcement of the triumph of God in Christ. This triumph might be called into question by his mention in 3:1 that Paul is a prisoner for the cause of Christ Jesus. That is, if God has indeed

¹⁵ Lindemann 1985, 34.

installed Christ as cosmic Lord over all things, how is it that Paul, his emissary, is in prison—an apparent defeat? The purpose of the digression is to explain this paradoxical situation, demonstrating that Paul’s execution of his ministry while in prison is actually an epitome of the triumph of God in Christ. His imprisonment is bringing about the eschatological glory of the Gentiles (3:13), and despite the shame of being a prisoner, he continues to occupy the cosmically significant position as administrator of God’s grace. It is through Paul’s preaching that God calls the church into being, which then points to the triumph of God by demonstrating his manifold wisdom to the powers ruling the present evil age (3:10). Even in apparent defeat, God demonstrates his triumph.

In the sixth chapter, we will argue that Eph 4:1-16 is not simply a call for unity, but rather a discussion of the equipment and empowerment of the church by God for its task of engaging in divine warfare against the evil powers. The church is the earthly manifestation of the triumphant warrior Christ and, as such, is called to participate in the triumph of God in Christ. This reading of Eph 4:1-16 also facilitates a satisfying solution to one of the most stubborn interpretive problems in Ephesians—the quotation of Psalm 68 in Eph 4:8. I will argue that the writer did not cite this text mistakenly—that is, out of context—as some writers claim,¹⁶ but rather appeals to the narrative logic of Psalm 68, a strategy made clear by reference to the ideology of divine warfare. When the argument of Ephesians is read against the background of this divine warfare imagery, a satisfying solution to the problem of the writer’s citation of scripture emerges into view.

The same is the case for understanding how the exhortatory portion of Ephesians is integrally related to the first half of the letter, as demonstrated in the final chapter.¹⁷ The writer portrays the church as the people of God residing in enemy territory—the present evil age ruled by the powers and authorities who seek to lead humanity astray from obedience to God—and the task of the church is to participate in the triumph of God in Christ by realizing its identity as the new creation people of God even while set in this hostile environment. When new

¹⁶ Mitton 1976, 148; Hamann 1982, 123.

¹⁷ Philip Esler objects to the use of terms such as ‘ethics’ or ‘paraenesis’ with reference to the exhortatory portions of NT letters (2003, 51-63). Such imprecision has characterized Ephesians scholarship, with its typical division of Ephesians into ‘theology’ (chapters 1-3) and ‘ethics’ (chapters 4-6). We agree with Esler’s criticisms, and note that this standard construal of the literary strategy in Ephesians has had miserable consequences for the status of Ephesians

creation life flourishes in Christian communities, the triumph of God in Christ over all competing cosmic forces is advertised to the powers and authorities in the heavenlies.

Our aim is to demonstrate that the ideology of divine warfare animates the argument of Ephesians, which is found in Eph 1:3-6:9. Our investigation, therefore, will not consider the closing exhortations to engage the power of God for combat against the powers. As we have just discussed, however, Yoder Neufeld has capably displayed the rich tradition of divine warfare typology being utilized in Eph 6:10-20.

Authorship

I will not engage issues regarding the authorship of Ephesians in this thesis. While I am convinced that this letter most likely was written by Paul, I do not want to distract from the central contention of my thesis—that the ideology of divine warfare animates the letter’s argument. I have, therefore, adopted the consensus position on this issue, which is that the letter was written in Paul’s name after his death. I will refer, throughout this thesis, to ‘the author’ or ‘the writer’ of Ephesians, in order to keep the reader’s focus on the central issue of the argument of Ephesians.

within the Pauline corpus. We will instead employ categories of ‘identity formation’ and ‘task’ or ‘exhortation’, instead of ‘theology/doctrine’ and ‘ethics’.

CHAPTER 2

THE PATTERN OF DIVINE WARFARE

Introduction

A number of scholars have noted that in the ANE the pattern of divine warfare was a common ideological tool for narrating and celebrating the rise of a nation's deity to the status of supreme god over all creation and over all other deities.¹ It was utilized to express how a national deity had defeated a rival deity, or had overcome the forces of chaos that threatened the created order, and now ruled as the universal and cosmic sovereign. According to D. Aune, this 'mythic narrative pattern of a primordial cosmic struggle between two divine beings and their allies for sovereignty was widespread throughout the ancient world'. He further notes that while 'the names of the combatants, as well as their roles, change from culture to culture, many of the constituent folklore motifs of the combat myth or legend either remain constant or are subject to a limited range of variation'.²

The narratives that utilize the pattern of divine warfare usually articulate the conflict between two combatants resulting in the triumph of one over the other. The victor is then proclaimed the universal and cosmic king, after which that deity is to have a house or temple built in his/her honour (or, the deity resumes the throne after successfully meeting a challenge to the deity's supremacy). The triumph of the deity is celebrated by the people loyal to the deity at the deity's temple. A final element to this pattern is that the deity now turns to bless his/her people with peace and protection, and the land with fertility.³

The present chapter consists of an analysis of a number of texts to establish this pattern. Two texts from the ANE will be examined followed by a discussion of the pattern as it appears in the OT, first in the composition of the Song of the

¹ Longman and Reid 1995, 83-88; Miller 1973, 64; Kang 1989, 122; Cross 1973, 93, 142; Hanson 1979, 299-324; 1973, 37-59; Kapelrud 1963, 56, 62; Millar 1976, 71-81; Dozeman 1996, 156; Kloos 1986, 152; Yarbrough Collins 1976; 1998, 176.

² Aune 1998, 667. For the pattern of divine warfare in Greek literature, see Fontenrose 1959; Forsyth 1987.

³ Longman proposes that the following five-fold pattern be regarded as 'the pattern of divine warfare': Conflict, victory, kingship, house-building and celebration (Longman and Reid 1995, 83-88). This five-fold pattern is useful in that nearly every instance of the appropriation of the myth involves each element of this pattern, though invariably other elements will be found, such as the development of the threatening situation, victory shout, procession, salvation of the people and theophany.

Sea in Exodus 15, then in a number of psalms from the Hebrew Psalter. Finally, in order to establish that the mythic pattern was current in the first century C.E., three instances of the use of the pattern in the book of Revelation will be discussed as well as the appearance of the mythic pattern on the outer frieze of the Great Altar in Pergamon.

Examples from the Ancient Near East

That the religious imagination of the ANE was animated by a basic myth of divine warfare is evident in a variety of documents from that culture. In this section, we examine the combat myths as they appear in the Ugaritic Baal Cycles and in *Enuma elish*.

The Pattern in the Ugaritic Baal Cycles

There are two cycles in the Baal kingship mythology. They tell the story of Baal earning and maintaining his supremacy and kingship over the two main threats against the maintenance of order in the universe—chaos, represented by the god Yamm, and death, represented by the god Mot.⁴

In the first cycle, Yamm⁵ appears to have won the favor of the supreme god El,⁶ who orders the craftsman god, Kothar-wa-Khasis, to build Yamm a temple, which is only fitting for an exalted god.⁷ Several of the other gods in the pantheon have objections to the exaltation of Yamm by El, including Baal, an ambitious and powerful god.⁸ Because Yamm sees Baal as a threat to his rule, he sends messengers to the gathered pantheon to demand that El hand over Baal to be Yamm's servant. The gods in the pantheon are intimidated by Yamm's show of

⁴ On the relationship between the Baal-cycle and the Ugaritic cult, see Petersen 1998, 55-67; Kinet 1978, 236-44.

⁵ Yamm ('sea'), also called 'Judge Nahar (river)', is seen as the god of the seas and rivers, representing 'the unruly powers of the universe who threatened chaos' in Ugaritic mythology (Cross 1973, 116).

⁶ III AB C 7-15. All citations are from Ginsberg 1969, 129-42. In the Ugaritic pantheon of the gods, El is the creator god who is supreme over all of the gods. Though he at times appears to be threatened by shows of force from other gods, his position as ruler of the gods is seen as secure (Gibson 1984, 202). For an alternative view that El was seeking to install Yamm as his own successor, see Millar 1976, 72; Pope 1955, 91-93.

⁷ Kapelrud 1963, 62. For Kothar-wa-Khasis as spell-caster as well as craftsman, see Smith 1984, 377-80.

⁸ III AB B 3-10. While Baal is often viewed as the god of fertility, Gibson notes that he is primarily the wind and weather god of the Ugaritic pantheon. 'As the controller of the rains he has *ipso facto* a crucial function in assuring the fertility of the soil, but he is also the sender of storm and lightning and in that function he is to be as much feared as a danger as revered as a benefactor' (Gibson 1984, 206).

force and El appears quite eager to hand over Baal, offering to send him with gifts to Yamm.⁹

Baal reacts strongly to being put in subjection to Yamm. He lashes out in anger at Yamm's messengers but is urged to relent by Ashtoreh, El's wife, the mother of the pantheon of the gods. Baal then challenges Yamm to battle and is supported by Kothar-wa-Khasis, who equips Baal with two clubs for the fight.¹⁰ After an initial unsuccessful attack on Yamm, Baal thoroughly trounces him, resulting in the confinement of Yamm to the seas.¹¹ After this, Baal demands from El that a palace be built in his honour, since it is only right that the victorious and supreme god have a house built for him.¹² After several efforts of lobbying El in this regard, El agrees that a house must be built for Baal. Baal rejoices and Kothar-wa-Khasis is commissioned to build the palace,¹³ which is followed by a feast of celebration hosted by Baal for the pantheon of the gods.¹⁴

The second cycle begins with a challenge by Mot to Baal's kingship.¹⁵ Mot is seen as a serious threat, so Baal instructs his messengers to approach Mot with extreme caution. The messengers warn Mot to remain in his abode of the underworld and not to challenge Baal's kingship.¹⁶ Baal must face Mot, however, since the threat that Mot will overstep his appointed realm remains a real one. Baal goes down to meet Mot in battle and is defeated by him. Mot rejoices in his victory and El mourns intensely for Baal.¹⁷ Anath, Baal's sister, orders Mot to give back Baal, and after Mot's refusal, Anath enters into battle with Mot and

⁹ III AB B 12-38.

¹⁰ III AB B 39-AB A 12.

¹¹ III AB A 29-30. Jacobsen 1968, 107. It appears that the death of the gods involved the crushing of their malevolent exercise of powers. While the god's independent will has been crushed, his/her force is still felt (Wakeman 1973, 40; Hornung 1956, 38-32; Te Velde 1967, 103-5).

¹² II AB 5-15.

¹³ At this point Kothar suggests that the palace include a window, a proposal which Baal rejects a number of times before finally permitting it to be installed. Scholars are divided as to the nature and purpose of the window, which appears to be tied to the issues of the identity of Baal—storm god or god of fertility—and to how closely the mythology is connected to Ugaritic cult rituals. See Grønbæk 1985, 34-35; Løkkegaard 1955, 17; Wakeman 1973, 37-38; Gaster 1966, 188; Fisher 1965, 318; Hvidberg 1962, 46.

¹⁴ II AB ii—vii.

¹⁵ Mot is the god of the underworld, including death and is seen as the god who brings drought and famine by causing the heavens to burn up, scorching the earth's produce (Gibson 1984, 217).

¹⁶ II AB viii.

¹⁷ I AB ii-vi. Oddly, Mot does not ascend Baal's throne to take his place, but rather a new god from the pantheon is sought to replace Baal. Unfortunately, however, the candidates for his position fail to measure up to the stature of Baal's throne.

manages to take back Baal alive.¹⁸ El celebrates the fact that Baal is alive¹⁹ and Baal and Mot re-engage in battle. The fighting is fierce with both gods managing to inflict serious wounds on each other without either achieving decisive victory. El intervenes in the fight and awards victory to Baal. The power of El to back up his judgment forces Mot into submission and Baal resumes his seat of dominion and kingship.²⁰

The pattern of divine warfare:

Cycle 1

Threat (Yamm demands that Baal be his servant)

Conflict (Between Baal and Yamm)

Victory (of Baal over Yamm)

Kingship (of Baal declared)

House-building (Palace built for Baal, symbolizing his kingship)

Celebration (of the gods at the Palace of Baal)

Cycle 2

Threat (Baal's kingship threatened by Mot)

Conflict (Between Baal and Mot)

Victory (of Baal over Mot, though not decisive)

Kingship (Baal's kingship is re-established, and he returns to his throne)

The Pattern in *Enuma Elish*

This pattern also determines the structure of the narrative in *Enuma elish*, which appears to contain two cycles, similar to the Baal cycles above. However, the first brief episode relates how the basic powers of the universe came into being, while the second, more extended, story tells how the present order of the world came about.²¹ In this Babylonian epic,²² the older gods Tiamat²³ and Apsu,²⁴ who treasured their rest, were disturbed by the raucous behavior of the younger gods, to whom they were mother and father.²⁵ Apsu could not get them to calm down so that Tiamat and Apsu could rest, so he proposed to Tiamat that they slay these younger gods. Tiamat objected to destroying their own offspring,

¹⁸ I AB ii. On Anath, see Walls 1992.

¹⁹ Just how it is that Baal dies and comes back to life is not made clear. See Smith 1998, 257-313; Smith 1987, 521-27; Barstad 1984, 150-51.

²⁰ I AB v-vi.

²¹ Jacobsen 1976, 168.

²² Translation taken from Speiser 1969, 60-72. For background and textual issues, see Lambert 1965, 287-300; Jacobsen 1976, 167-68.

²³ Tiamat is the sea-goddess, specifically the salt water sea (Jacobsen 1968, 105; Heidel 1963, 3).

²⁴ Apsu is the primeval sweet-water ocean, the husband of Tiamat (Heidel, 1963, 3).

²⁵ I, 20-30.

but Apsu would not be pacified. When Ea²⁶ heard of the plot of Apsu, he cast a spell upon Apsu, putting him to sleep. He then slew him, building his own dwelling upon Apsu.²⁷

Ea then gave birth to Marduk²⁸ who was endowed with great power, becoming 'the loftiest of the gods'.²⁹ Tiamat is again disturbed, apparently by the commotion of the gods over Marduk.³⁰ This time, a number of the gods in her company provoke Tiamat to enter into battle, arguing that she might suffer the same fate as Apsu if she does nothing. Tiamat is aroused with anger and creates a variety of demons and other beasts in order to destroy the younger gods.³¹ She also appoints Kingu as chief in charge of the battle plan, whom she also appears to take as her husband.³²

When Ea learns of Tiamat's plans to avenge Apsu, he goes to his grandfather Anshu for counsel.³³ Anshu tells Ea that he must go and slay Tiamat. After Ea and then Anu both fail to defeat or pacify Tiamat, the situation appears hopeless.³⁴ Marduk then promises defeat Tiamat, but will only do so if the pantheon of gods grants him absolute supremacy: 'If I indeed, as your avenger, am to vanquish Tiamat and save your lives, set up the Assembly, proclaim supreme my destiny!'³⁵ The gods agree to grant Marduk 'kingship over the universe entire', joyfully proclaiming, 'Marduk is king!'³⁶

Marduk then goes to battle against Tiamat and her chief, Kingu. When he first approaches his enemy, Marduk is initially confused and distracted,³⁷ at which

²⁶ Ea is the god of magic, and superior in wisdom, who appears to be a leader of some sort in the pantheon of the younger gods (Heidel 1963, 5; Jacobsen 1976, 170-71).

²⁷ I, 60-76.

²⁸ Marduk is the god of the storm, and thus rain, thunder and lightning (Jacobsen 1968, 106; Kang 1989, 39).

²⁹ I, 98.

³⁰ I, 100-115. It appears that Tiamat was disturbed by the commotion surrounding the celebration of Marduk's birth, possibly causing a wave to arouse Tiamat from her state of rest (Lambert 1992, 2:527; Wakeman 1973, 17).

³¹ According to Wakeman, the demonic manifestations to which Tiamat gives birth are symbols of disorder and chaos (1973, 17).

³² I, 127-150.

³³ II, 1-10.

³⁴ II, 85-92.

³⁵ II, 123-125. Frankfort sees Marduk's behavior here as a threatening power-play (1948, 220). It may have been that, though Marduk was young and powerful, he lacked the authority of the senior members of the pantheon of the gods, and so obtained unrivalled power through his offer to fight Tiamat (Jacobsen 1949, 193).

³⁶ IV, 20-30.

³⁷ IV, 67-68. According to Heidel's translation, Marduk appears to confuse Kingu, perhaps with the 'evil eye' (Heidel 1963, 8, 39; cf. also Jacobsen 1976, 177). Wakeman, however,

point Tiamat taunts him defiantly. Marduk comes to his senses and accuses Tiamat of seeking to destroy her offspring and granting to Kingu a rank that is not rightfully his.³⁸ He then challenges Tiamat to do battle. Tiamat is aroused furiously, ‘like one possessed’, and seeks to devour Marduk. Marduk, however, forces Tiamat’s mouth open and shoots an arrow into her belly, cutting through her insides and ‘splitting the heart’.³⁹ Marduk then crushes Tiamat and out of her carcass creates the heavens.⁴⁰

Because Marduk had provided salvation for the gods, they build him the temple Esagila. They also erect for him a stagetower as high as the waters of Apsu are deep, so that he can sit in their presence in grandeur.⁴¹ There is then a celebratory feast at which the gods proclaim the fifty names of the exalted god Marduk.⁴²

The pattern of divine warfare:

Threat (Tiamat threatens to destroy the gods)

Conflict (Between Marduk and Tiamat)

Victory (of Marduk over Tiamat)

Kingship (of Marduk declared by the pantheon of gods)

House-building (Temple Esagila built by the gods for Marduk)

Celebration (of a feast of the gods at Esagila)

Examples from the Old Testament

The God of Israel is depicted as a victorious warrior throughout the OT, an image utilized to celebrate the salvation accomplished by Yahweh on behalf of his covenant people. P. Craigie notes that the imagery of Yahweh as Warrior is introduced in Exodus 15, the Song of the Sea, and developed throughout the Hebrew Psalter.⁴³ Throughout the Psalms Yahweh is portrayed as the Divine Warrior who triumphs over all competing forces and who sits enthroned as King

supports Speiser’s interpretation, maintaining that Marduk is initially confused by the sight of Kingu and Tiamat with her battle company. She claims that in the dragon battle tradition, it is customary for the hero to suffer an initial setback. Further, in several other cases where the paralyzing glance is mentioned, the villain, not the hero, employs it (Wakeman 1973, 18).

³⁸ IV, 80-83.

³⁹ IV, 101-102.

⁴⁰ IV, 130-146. Wakeman rightly notes that, though Marduk cuts Tiamat’s carcass in two, the text only mentions what Marduk does with one half of it (1973, 18). It is typically assumed that from the other half he creates the earth, but perhaps this is done merely to retain the symmetry. For explicit statements of this assumption, see Lambert 1992, 2:527; Heidel 1963, 9; Kramer 1961, 121.

⁴¹ VI, 49-70.

⁴² VI, 71-VII, 144.

⁴³ Craigie 1972, 143-51.

over all creation. The pattern of divine warfare and accompanying mythological imagery underlie many of these texts, as this section will demonstrate.⁴⁴

Significantly, this pattern provides the framework for a diversity of types of psalms, such as those that would have been part of an annual festival celebrating the kingship of Yahweh, Zion psalms, and those composed to celebrate the ascension of a new human king.

The Song of the Sea: Exodus 15:1-18

The Song of the Sea in Exodus 15:1-18 is a hymn celebrating the defeat by Yahweh of the Egyptian army at the Re(e)d Sea.⁴⁵ The song is modeled on the odes of triumph that greeted victorious kings upon their return in the ANE.⁴⁶ Scholars disagree as to the role of this song in Israel's cult, though it was most likely part of an antiphonal celebration performed by men and women.⁴⁷ Men would sing the song of Moses, with the women singing the refrain in vv. 19-21, the so-called Song of Miriam.⁴⁸

The subject of the song is the victorious Yahweh, with praise for his decisive victory over Pharaoh and the Egyptians dominating the song. While other victory hymns in the OT refer to human leaders of Israel alongside praise of Yahweh for granting victory,⁴⁹ this song contains no mention of Moses or any other human. The intensity and frequency of occurrences of the name of Yahweh,

⁴⁴ Some of the psalms discussed would have been part of an annual festival celebrating the kingship of Yahweh, though discussion of this debate will not be engaged here, since it is beyond the scope of the present work. On the debate over the royal cult and the enthronement psalms, see Brettler 1989, 125-40; Weltern 1982, 299-310; Rosengren Petersen 1998; Clines 1974, 22-40; Day 1993, 67-87.

⁴⁵ For an analysis of the song as a psalm set within the surrounding narrative context, see Watts 1992, 41-62.

⁴⁶ Cassuto 1967, 173; Clements 1972, 91; Watts 1957, 371; Brenner 1991, 36.

⁴⁷ Sarna 1991, 76. For further discussion of placement in the cult, see Kugel 1981, 116-19; Muilenburg 1966, 236-38; Mowinckel 1962, 2:247. On the view that the Song of Moses is a development of the earlier Song of Miriam, see Janzen 1992, 211-20; Coats 1969, 1-17.

⁴⁸ Propp 1999, 508; Sarna 1991, 76; Kugel 1981, 116-19. The song is divided into three strophes (vv. 1-6; 7-11; 12-16) with vv. 17-18 serving as an epilogue. The repetition of certain words or phrases mark off the end of each strophe. The two lines in v. 6 begin with the phrase 'Your right hand, O Yahweh...' (... יְמִינְךָ יְהוָה ... יְמִינְךָ יְהוָה), and v. 11 repeats the question 'Who is like you?' (... מִי כָמוֹךָ ... מִי כָמוֹךָ). The phrase 'till ... pass by' (... עַד-יַעְבֹּר ... עַד-יַעְבֹּר) appears twice in the middle of v. 16. In addition, before these repeated phrases and words, there is, in each strophe, a simile (v. 5, כָּמוֹ אֶבֶן, 'like a stone'; v. 10, כְּעוֹפֶרֶת, 'as lead'; v. 16, כָּמוֹ אֶבֶן, 'as a stone') (Cassuto 1967, 173). Propp argues that the structure of the song follows the prose account in Exod 1:1-14:31 (1999, 521).

⁴⁹ E.g., the Song of Deborah in Judg 5:1-31.

especially in the first three verses, further stress that the victory could only be attributed to Yahweh.⁵⁰

The song speaks of Yahweh in intimate terms. In v. 2, Yahweh has become ‘my strength’ (עֲזָרָי) and ‘protection’ (וְזִמְרָה).⁵¹ He is ‘my God’ (אֱלֹהֵי) and ‘my father’s God’ (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִי), phrases that allowed individual Israelites in succeeding generations to identify with the confession.⁵²

The song claims that the very identity of Yahweh is that he is a warrior. According to v. 3, Yahweh is ‘a man of war’ (אִישׁ מִלְחָמָה), Yahweh is his name’. To refer to the name of a deity or a person in the OT was to speak of his very character, or his identity.⁵³ That Yahweh is a ‘man of war’ is demonstrated in the preceding narrative and in the remainder of the song, where his exploits against Egypt are recounted.

The conflict in the song is between Yahweh and Pharaoh with his army. According to some scholars, the mythological motifs in the song indicate that Yahweh and the sea must be the respective combatants. However, the fight is taken to the Egyptians by Yahweh *at the sea*.⁵⁴ Further, the enemy is specified as the Egyptians, in vv. 9-10, where their lust for vengeance leads them into the Re(e)d Sea. Though mythical imagery dominates the song, the sea is not personified, being merely a weapon in the hands of Yahweh.⁵⁵

Yahweh, in manipulating the sea as a weapon, throws the horse and its rider ‘into the sea’ (בַּיָּם) (v. 1).⁵⁶ In v. 4, Pharaoh’s chariots and army are cast ‘into the sea’ (בַּיָּם) and his officers are drowned ‘in the Re(e)d Sea’ (בְּיַם־סוּף).

⁵⁰ Hauser 1987, 267. Propp notes that, ‘In fact, God’s name is the dominant theme of 15:1b-18’ (1999, 513).

⁵¹ For a defense of זִמְרָה as ‘protection’, see Parker 1971, 373-79; Barré 1992, 623-37; Childs 1974, 242; Propp 1999, 513. Loewenstamm argues that זִמְרָה be read as ‘glory’ (1969, 464-70). He is followed by Good 1970, 358-59.

⁵² Propp 1999, 514.

⁵³ In Exod 34:14, the worship of any god beside Yahweh is forbidden, because ‘Yahweh, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God’. In 1 Sam 25:25, the character of Nabal as one who is foolish is epitomized by his name: ‘for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him’.

⁵⁴ Cross, 1973, 131-32; Kloos 1986, 151; Wolters 1990, 239.

⁵⁵ Admittedly, the mythological motifs are strong, influencing the development of later tradition in this direction (Kang 1989, 123-24). For the development of the tradition in the Psalms, see also Gillingham 1999, 19-46; Craigie 1972, 143-51.

⁵⁶ On the problematic phrase יָם־סוּף, see Kloos 1986, 128; Propp 1999, 510; contra Brenner 1991, 82-84.

‘The deeps’ (תְּהוֹמוֹת) cover the Egyptians, as they go down into ‘the depths’ (בְּמַצְוֵלֶת) like a stone (v. 5). Yahweh first makes ‘the waters’ (מַיִם) stand up (v. 8), and then blows with his breath so that ‘the sea’ (יָם) covers the Egyptians, who then sink like lead ‘in the majestic waters’ (בְּמַיִם אֲדִירִים) (v. 10). The sea, far from being the enemy of Yahweh in the song, is depicted as both the weapon of Yahweh and the theatre of his conflict with the Egyptians.

The song ascribes absolute supremacy to Yahweh, emphasizing the overwhelming nature of his victory over the Egyptians. The imagery of the chariot and its driver being cast into the sea (v. 1) is quite unexpected and somewhat jarring. Chariot-drivers normally would be overrun or cast to the ground from their chariots while sailors would usually be cast into the sea. The imagery here points to the bizarre and awesome nature of the victory of Yahweh.⁵⁷

Further, the language describing Yahweh’s warring against Egypt is vigorous: he ‘flung’ (רָמָה) the chariots of Egypt into the sea (v. 2).⁵⁸ In v. 4, Yahweh ‘threw’ (רָמָה) Pharaoh and his officers into the sea. Propp, noting that רָמָה could be read as ‘shot’, detects a variation on the myth from the battle between Marduk and Tiamat: ‘instead of subduing the Sea by shooting arrows into it, Yahweh subdues Egypt by shooting Egypt itself into the Sea’.⁵⁹

The imagery throughout the song contrasts the loftiness and supreme power of Yahweh, and the humiliation and defeat of the Egyptians. The song moves from elevation to depression, featuring the language of rising and falling. Egypt progresses downward, from the shore, to the sea, to the underworld, moving metaphorically from great military might and glory to ignominious death. At the same time, Israel ascends, from slavery in Egypt, to the sea, to the safe habitation of Yahweh’s mountain. ‘The more imaginative reader might feel the up and down of the Sea’s waves.’⁶⁰ Yahweh is ‘highly exalted’ (v. 1), ‘majestic in power’ (v. 6), and the song extols ‘the greatness of your excellence’ (v. 7). The Egyptians,

⁵⁷ Propp 1999, 511.

⁵⁸ Clements 1972, 91.

⁵⁹ Propp, 1999, 511.

⁶⁰ Propp 1999, 510.

on the other hand, are ‘hurled into the sea’ (v. 1), where they sink ‘like a stone’ (v. 5). They ‘sank like lead’ (v. 10) and ‘the earth swallowed them’ (v. 12).⁶¹

Because of his defeat of Pharaoh and the Egyptian army, Yahweh is proclaimed as king. The song celebrates that ‘he is highly exalted’ (יָשָׁר יָשָׁר). This term in an infinitive absolute, whereby the יָשָׁר is duplicated, is commonly used in passages alluding to Yahweh’s unique majesty, especially when that majesty is vindicated through mighty acts of deliverance and salvation (Deut 23:26; Ps 68:35; 93:1; Isa 12:5).⁶² In an echo of *Enuma elish* and the Baal myth, v. 11 asks, ‘who is like you among the gods, O Yahweh?’ The song ends with the explicit declaration of his kingship in v. 18, declaring that ‘Yahweh will reign forever and ever’ (יְהוָה יִמְלֹךְ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד).

Because Yahweh is king it is only fitting that he construct his temple. In v. 17, three parallel phrases are used to speak of Yahweh’s temple. It is called ‘the mountain of your inheritance’ (בְּהָר נַחֲלֵיךָ), a place ‘for your dwelling’ (לְשִׁבְתֶּךָ), and ‘the sanctuary’ (מִקְדָּשְׁךָ). Scholars are divided as to whether these terms refer to the land of Canaan,⁶³ to Jerusalem,⁶⁴ to the Jerusalem Temple,⁶⁵ or are arranged in a narrowing sequence, referring respectively to Canaan, Jerusalem, and the Temple.⁶⁶ They are most likely parallel expressions referring to Jerusalem, understood as Zion, the holy mountain of Yahweh, and the temple in which Yahweh sits on his throne. While ‘the mountain of your inheritance’ could be taken to refer to the hill country of Palestine,⁶⁷ it more probably refers to Mount Zion, on which the temple of Yahweh stood. This is clear from a number of similar names referring to Zaphon, the mountain on which the temple of Baal was located.⁶⁸ In the text of the Baal Cycles, it is called ‘my mountain, divine Zaphon, . . . the sanctuary, mount of my portion . . . the hill which I possess’.⁶⁹

⁶¹ On the earth as metaphor for the grave, see Wifall 1980, 325-32.

⁶² Smith and Hamilton 1997, 1:787.

⁶³ Noth 1962, 126; Cassuto 1967, 177. A strong argument for this position comes from the connection between ‘the territory/border of your holiness’ (גְּבוּל קִדְשֶׁךָ), referring to Canaan, and ‘this mountain (הַרְךָ) which his right hand had gained’ (McCurley 1983, 150).

⁶⁴ Day 1985, 98-100.

⁶⁵ Clements 1972, 92.

⁶⁶ Davies 1967, 130; Muilenburg 1966, 249.

⁶⁷ Hyatt 1971, 168.

⁶⁸ Sarna 1991, 82; Bozeman 1996, 156-57.

⁶⁹ V AB C 26-27 (Ginsberg 1969, 136).

The pattern of divine warfare:

Conflict – between Yahweh and Egypt (Pharaoh)

Theophany – nature convulses at the appearance of the Divine Warrior (v. 8)

Victory – of Yahweh over the Egyptian army

Kingship – of Yahweh declared as a result of his victory

House-building – the Temple in Jerusalem is to be Yahweh's throne

Psalm 29

Psalm 29 begins with a call to worship Yahweh (vv. 1-2).⁷⁰ The earthly congregation gathered at the temple in Jerusalem calls out to the 'sons of god' (בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) in the heavens to worship and ascribe glory to Yahweh.⁷¹ The phrase בְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים refers to the divine assembly, those angelic beings who serve before the heavenly throne of the Most High God.⁷² In the Ugaritic texts, the same phrase is used to refer to the minor gods who were the offspring of El, and who formed the pantheon of which he was the head. In the OT, however, it functions within a monotheistic framework, referring to the members of the court of Yahweh who do his bidding.⁷³

The 'sons of god' are called upon to give to Yahweh the glory (כְּבוֹד) that is due him in light of his awesome appearance (v. 2). It is difficult to determine if

⁷⁰ The origin of Psalm 29 has occasioned no small amount of debate. In 1936, H. L. Ginsberg argued that the psalm has a Phoenician origin, entering the Hebrew Psalter after appropriate adaptation (1936, 472-76). A radical strand of this viewpoint maintains that the substitution of the name of Yahweh for Baal was the only change made from the original (Seybold 1980, 212). Ginsberg's argument was based on a number of similarities, which, when taken as a whole, present a fairly strong cumulative case. His hypothesis has proved influential and has been followed by a number of scholars (Dahood 1965, 175; Greenstein 1992, 49; Cross 1973, 151-52). O. Loretz, on the other hand, argues that the psalm is not a unity but that three ancient traditions have been adapted and combined. Verses 1-2 and 9c find their origin in a tradition about El, while two traditions about Baal make up the rest of the contents of the psalm (vv. 3-9a; vv. 10-11) (1984). There is good reason, however, to view this psalm as a unity and as an original composition in praise of Yahweh. While the imagery employed in the psalm is taken from the ANE and has parallels in Ugaritic literature, 'caution should nevertheless be expressed against an overly simplistic interpretation of that evidence' (Klingbeil 1999, 99). A number of parallels upon which Ginsberg based his hypothesis have been shown to be more supposed than real in light of more recent scholarship (Klingbeil 1999, 99; cf. also Kloos, 1986, 98-112). Furthermore, the unity of the psalm has been demonstrated by a number of structural studies (Freedman and Hyland 1973, 256; Klingbeil 1999, 94). Thus, while it is obvious that the psalm contains elements common to the surrounding cultural milieu, it also appears that they have been reworked and filled with new content resulting in an original composition (Klingbeil 1999, 99; Craigie 1972, 143-51; Margulis 1970, 332-48).

⁷¹ Eaton 1967, 89;

⁷² Broyles 1999, 152; Weiser 1962, 262; Rogerson and McKay, 1977, 130.

⁷³ Dahood 1965, 175; Craigie 1983, 246.

בְּהִדְרָת-קִיָּשׁ refers to the clothing of the worshipers ('in holy array')⁷⁴—whether in the earthly or heavenly temple—or to the glorious appearance of Yahweh ('in the splendor of his holiness').⁷⁵ The latter is more consistent within the context of a 'theophany psalm', since the powerful storm that provides the occasion of the psalm is understood as the appearance of Yahweh in his glory.⁷⁶

The main section of the psalm, comprising vv. 3-9, speaks about the voice of Yahweh and its effects upon nature. The imagery is of a thunderstorm forming and developing over the Mediterranean Sea and then moving inland,⁷⁷ and the psalm abounds with allusions to the mythological battle and victory over the forces of chaos.

The central section opens with the 'voice' (קוֹל) of Yahweh 'upon the waters' (עַל-הַמַּיִם) (v. 3). The thunderstorm calls to mind the mastery of Yahweh over Yamm, the sea god who threatened the stability of life in the ANE. In 3b, Yahweh 'thunders' (הִרְעִים) and takes his position 'over the mighty waters' (עַל-מַיִם רַבִּים) (3c). This scene portrays Yahweh's superiority over Yamm, emphasizing that, just as at the Re(e)d Sea event, the sea is not a rival to Yahweh, but merely a tool of conquest in his hand.⁷⁸

Verse 4 describes the voice of Yahweh as 'powerful' (בִּבְרָה) and 'majestic' (בְּהִדְרָה). Verses 5-6 elaborate on this description by noting the effects of his voice on the symbols of power and strength from the north. The voice of Yahweh demolishes the 'cedars of Lebanon', trees that were specially noted for their strength and durability.⁷⁹ The great and immovable mountains of Lebanon are made to 'skip like a lamb' at the sound of his voice.

Though it appears that in v. 7 the voice of Yahweh is being compared to lightning and its effects, the phraseology is difficult. הִצַּב typically is not connected with lightning bolts, but used as a technical term for the hewing of

⁷⁴ Eaton 1967, 89; Oesterley 1939, 201.

⁷⁵ Dahood 1965, 176; Broyles 1999, 152; Anderson 1972, 1:234-35.

⁷⁶ Weiser 1962, 260; Hanson 1979, 307; Niehaus 1997, 4:1247-50.

⁷⁷ Klingbeil 1999, 95.

⁷⁸ Craigie 1983, 247; Mays 1985, 62.

⁷⁹ Anderson 1972, 1:236. Dahood notes that when the palace of Baal was to be built, workers repaired 'to Lebanon and its timbers, to Shirion and its choicest cedars' (UT, 51:VI;20-21) (1965, 178).

stone, metal, or wood.⁸⁰ Greenstein prefers to solve the problem by emending the MT, reading הַצֵּי instead of הַצֵּב and thus rendering v. 7, ‘Hark! YHWH—his arrows are flames of fire!’⁸¹ Klingbeil, however, notes that, ‘the transition from ב to ל, viz., ל is unlikely in early Hebrew’. He argues that הַצֵּב is the effect of God’s voice upon the rocky mountains. It has such an impact that it creates sparks like a firestone causing flames of fire.⁸² However the phrase is understood, the imagery is that of the Divine Warrior, who is commonly depicted in the ANE as wielding lightning as a weapon.⁸³

The storm continues to move inland, where its effects are seen upon the ‘desert/wilderness of Kadesh’ (מִדְבַּר קֵדְשׁ) (v. 8), and felt by both plants and animals (v. 9).⁸⁴ The voice of Yahweh strikes with such force that animals are startled into giving premature birth, just as it rips through forests, stripping them bare (v. 9).⁸⁵ The thundering voice of Yahweh also elicits the ecstatic cry of ‘glory!’ to go up from those in the heavenly temple (9c).⁸⁶ This is the fulfillment of the call in vv. 1-2.⁸⁷

The closing section of the psalm (vv. 10-11) emphasizes the eternal (לְעֹלָם) and universal kingship of Yahweh. He reigns as sovereign over all competing forces, even the dark and threatening forces of chaos. Picking up the imagery from v. 3, v. 10a pictures Yahweh as sitting enthroned ‘over the flood’ (לְמַבְּנֵל), an allusion to the flood account in Genesis 6, where Yahweh

⁸⁰ Greenstein 1992, 50.

⁸¹ Greenstein 1992, 56.

⁸² Klingbeil 1999, 86.

⁸³ Craigie 1983, 248.

⁸⁴ While most scholars agree that there is some mythological connotation present, the precise geographical identification of the desert has been a matter of some debate (Seybold 1980, 211). The two main options are the desert of Kadesh in the south, and the Kadesh on the Orontes in the north. Though a southern locale might provide a note of completion to the overall geographical descriptions in the psalm, the northern location seems to be in view, since it is nearer to the other places mentioned and provides continuity with the imagery of the storm moving inland from off the Sea (Dahood 1965, 178; Cross 1973, 154; Klingbeil 1999, 96).

⁸⁵ Because of the supposed oddity of a reference to ‘hinds’ in this context, some have proposed reading וַיִּלְחָצוּ as from וַיִּלְחָצוּ, ‘mighty tree, oak’ (Briggs 1906, 253-54; Anderson 1972, 1:237-38; Domeris 1997, 901). This would yield the reading, ‘makes the oaks to whirl/twist’, providing a more sensible parallel with 9a. It appears preferable, however, to read ‘hinds’ here, so that the effect of the voice of Yahweh is felt by the botanical world as well as by animals (Klingbeil 1999, 87; Rogerson and McKay 1977, 131).

⁸⁶ Rogerson and McKay 1977, 131.

⁸⁷ Weiser 1962, 264; Mays 1994b, 63.

manipulated the waters for his own purposes in judgment.⁸⁸ Even when the forces of the flood were used for destruction, ‘Yamm’ was still only a tool in the hand of Yahweh. Finally, the psalm proclaims that ‘Yahweh sits as king forever’ (וַיֵּשֶׁב יְהוָה מֶלֶךְ לְעוֹלָם) (v. 10b), and because of his sovereign rule, he can guarantee ‘peace’ (שָׁלוֹם) (11b) for his people, just as he gives them his ‘strength’ (11a).

The pattern of divine warfare:

Conflict-Victory (vv. 3-9)

Victory shout (v. 9b)

Kingship (v. 10)

Housebuilding (worship of Yahweh in his temple) (vv. 9c-10)

Celebration (vv. 1-2, 9c)

Blessing (provision of peace and giving of strength to the people) (vv. 10-11)

Psalm 68:12-24

The interpretive difficulties that Psalm 68 presents are almost legendary.⁸⁹ The psalm contains more than fifteen *hapax legomena* as well as about two dozen words that are used less than twenty times in the MT, half of which occur less than ten times.⁹⁰ Such difficulties led W. F. Albright to propose that the psalm consisted of a collection of incipits, or first-line headings to a number of psalms, serving as something of an index for the Hebrew Psalter.⁹¹ Albright’s thesis has not met with general acceptance,⁹² and the unity of the psalm has been defended by a number of scholars.⁹³

The present investigation will focus on the central portion of the psalm, vv. 12-24, which depict Yahweh as cosmic king and as victorious Divine Warrior, and which has an intense collection of warfare imagery.⁹⁴ It presents the conquest of Canaan in mythological terms, depicting Yahweh, the Divine Warrior, proceeding

⁸⁸ Grisanti 1997, 2:836-37; Craigie 1983, 249; Klingbeil 199, 96.

⁸⁹ ‘There is hardly another song in the Psalter which in its corrupt text and its lack of coherence precipitates such serious problems for the interpreter as Psalm 68’ (Kraus 1989, 2:47).

⁹⁰ Tate 1990, 170.

⁹¹ Albright 1950, 1-39.

⁹² For a history of interpretation of the psalm see Gray 1977b, 2-8; Kraus 1989, 2:47-51.

⁹³ Klingbeil 1999, 122; Tate 1990, 172-73; Fokkeman 1990, 75.

⁹⁴ Hanson detects three ‘cycles’ of the pattern of divine warfare throughout the psalm (1979, 306).

from Sinai to his dwelling place on Zion, vanquishing his foes, both cosmic and earthly.⁹⁵

Verses 12-15 recall the victory of Sisera over the kings of Canaan who were gathered against him (Judg 5:19).⁹⁶ The victory was effected by divine decree after Yahweh⁹⁷ had given the ‘word’ (דָּבָר).⁹⁸ At his command the kings and their armies fled in fear. In vv. 12, 13a, the word ‘hosts/armies’ (צְבָא) appears twice, referring to the great host of those who spread the good news of the victory (12b) and to the armies of the kings (13a). This double reference emphasizes the great contrast between the fleeing kings and the exalted and victorious ‘Yahweh of hosts’.⁹⁹

The reference to women who divide up the spoils of war (v. 13b) is an allusion to the mother of Sisera with her maidens, who imagine the spoils of war being divided between the victors (Judg 5:30).¹⁰⁰ The imagery of verse 14 is notoriously difficult, but it most likely denotes the achievement of victory by Yahweh without the aid of the full contingent of the tribes of Israel.¹⁰¹

According to v. 15, the scattering of the kings by ‘Shaddai’¹⁰² is illustrated by the snow falling on Mount Zalmon. This mountain is most likely identified with Jebel ed-Druz, a mountain located near Bashan which has peaks more than 6000 feet high and on which snow falls in winter.¹⁰³ The rock of that mountain has a dark appearance (צָלָה, ‘to grow black’), so that the snow falling on the

⁹⁵ Broyles 1999, 282; Dahood 1968, 133.

⁹⁶ Kraus 1989, 2:52.

⁹⁷ דָּבָר is used here. This divine name occurs six times in the psalm (vv. 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 33) and carries connotations of universal lordship and kingship, designating Yahweh as the king of heaven (Klingbeil 1999, 128; Eissfeldt 1974, 1:63; Tate 1990, 164).

⁹⁸ The exact force of דָּבָר is difficult to determine. It can refer to spoken words, so that Yahweh can be depicted as releasing the ‘news’ of the victory, spreading it abroad (Kidner 1973, 1:240). Less likely is that it refers to the ‘thunder’ of Yahweh, alluding to his theophany as the Divine Warrior (Weiser 1962, 486). It can also be taken to refer to the ‘command’ or ‘decree’ of Yahweh, so that at his command, the victory is achieved. While the broad possibilities leave open varied shades of meaning, the third option is most likely in view (cf. Tate 1990, 178).

⁹⁹ Anderson 1972, 1:488.

¹⁰⁰ Kidner 1973, 1:240

¹⁰¹ Anderson 1972, 1:489; Tate 1990, 178.

¹⁰² This divine name occurs mainly in the patriarchal narratives (Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14; 48:3; 49:25), and in Job, where it is found 31 out of a total of 48 appearances in the OT. The term carries connotations of the God of Israel as ruler of all creation, especially in contrast to the claims of all other gods (Klingbeil 1999, 127; Kraus 1986, 25).

¹⁰³ Tate 1990, 166.

mountain and covering it with a blanket of white pictures the complete destruction by Yahweh of his enemies.¹⁰⁴

The central portion of the psalm (vv. 16-19) depicts the procession of the victorious Yahweh to Zion, his heavenly temple-mountain where he will dwell as supreme king over his vanquished foes.

Yahweh has chosen Zion for his eternal abode, which causes the majestic mountains of Bashan to ‘look with envy’ (הָרֵי בָשָׁן).¹⁰⁵ The superior beauty and stature of the mountains of Bashan is exaggerated by the five-fold repetition of הָרֵי. The mountains of Bashan are ‘many-peaked’ (הַרְבֵּי הָרִים) as well as being the dwelling place of the gods (v. 16).¹⁰⁶ Zion has nothing to offer by way of lofty appearance, but in spite of the impressive stature of the great mountains of Bashan, God has desired Zion for his eternal dwelling place. The independent colon in v. 17c stands out as perhaps the most significant statement in the psalm: ‘Yahweh will dwell there forever’ (אֵלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְנֶצַח).¹⁰⁷

The imagery in v. 18 is of the entourage that accompanies the victorious Divine Warrior as he continues his procession to his heavenly throne. Kingship and warrior motifs converge in v. 18a, where Yahweh is depicted as the king of heaven, accompanied by thousands of ‘chariots of God’ (רֶכֶב אֱלֹהִים) along with thousands of the angelic host.¹⁰⁸ The final phrase in v. 18 (סִינִי בִקְדָשׁ) portrays Yahweh triumphantly making his way from Sinai to Canaan and into the temple on Zion.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Klingbeil 1999, 132; Gray 1977b, 16.

¹⁰⁵ ‘Bashan’ and the ‘mountains of Bashan’ refer to Mt. Hermon and to the mountainous plateau which extends from it to the Yarmuk river (Klingbeil 1999, 127).

¹⁰⁶ הָרֵי אֱלֹהִים should be read as ‘mountain of the gods’ instead of the ‘mountain of God’. Mt. Hermon was known as the mountain of the gods in Canaanite religion. Interestingly, in 1 Enoch 6:6, it is on Mt. Hermon that the sons of God descended when they came to have sexual relations with the daughters of men (Day 1985, 116-17).

¹⁰⁷ Tate 1990, 180-81.

¹⁰⁸ Kraus 1989, 2:53. אֱלֹהֵי שָׁמַיִם provides another difficulty. Tate omits the אֱלֹהֵי and on the basis of dittography reads שָׁמַיִם, which is taken to be equivalent to the Ugaritic *tmn*, referring to a ‘class of archers/warriors who accompanied the chariots’ (1990, 166). Klingbeil, however, retains the MT and reads the term as ‘the bright ones’ referring to the angelic host (1999, 124).

¹⁰⁹ The phrase סִינִי בִקְדָשׁ is difficult to determine, though Klingbeil’s rendering (‘has come from Sinai into the sanctuary’) is favored because of the consideration that ‘Sinai’ is always a geographical term in the OT (Klingbeil 1999, 123; contra Tate 1990, 181; Kidner 1973, 1:241-42).

In v. 19, Yahweh ‘ascends’ (עָלָה) triumphantly to the ‘heights’ (לְמַרְוֹם) of his heavenly throne and as he does so, he leads a procession of his vanquished enemies (שָׁבִיתָ שְׁבִי, ‘you took captive captives’).¹¹⁰ The image is a familiar one in the ANE—that of a victorious king as he returns to his land leading the procession of prisoners of war and receiving tribute from his people.¹¹¹ Now that Yahweh (יְהוָה in 19b) has conquered his foes and is seated upon his heavenly throne, even his enemies who are in rebellion (סוֹרְרִים) against him are ready to acknowledge his rule.

The triumphant king has ascended his throne and receives the praise of his people in vv. 20-24. The psalmist calls on the people to praise the exalted God (אֱלֹהֵינוּ) ‘day after day’ (יִוֵּם יוֹם) (v. 20a).¹¹² He is praised as the ‘God of our salvation’ (אֱלֹהֵינוּ שׁוֹעֲתֵנוּ) and as being a ‘God of deliverances’ (אֱלֹהֵנוּ לְמוֹשָׁעוֹת) (vv. 20b, 21a).

Verses 21-24 praise Yahweh because he is supreme over all cosmic and earthly forces. He is exalted over the power of death, for ‘to Yahweh Adonai’ (לַיהוָה אֲדֹנָי) belong the ‘out-goings from death’ (לְמִמּוֹת תּוֹצְאוֹת). Whether or not there is a reference here to the mythological figure ‘Mot’, god of the underworld and of death,¹¹³ Yahweh’s supremacy over life and death is absolute.

Yahweh is exalted over the gods who dwell on Bashan as well as ‘Yamm’ the ominous and fearsome god of the sea. If the kings who have fled from Yahweh (v. 13) seek to hide in the ‘mountain of the gods’, this will prove no safe harbor from the arm of Yahweh.¹¹⁴ Neither will they be able to find safety in the seas, for he will be able to ‘bring them back’ (אָשִׁיבָם) to face judgment.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Dahood 1968, 143.

¹¹¹ See Isserlin for discussion of a 12th century ivory plaque from Megiddo which depicts ‘a victorious ruler returning in triumph, preceded by music and followed by captives led along, while on the left he is shown having taken his seat on the royal throne’ (1971, 5).

¹¹² Dahood 1968, 143.

¹¹³ Tate (1990, 181) sees a reference to Mot here, while Klingbeil (1999, 134) downplays the mythological elements of the psalm.

¹¹⁴ Dahood claims that this appearance of מִבְּשָׁן ought to be read without the preceding מ and identified with Ugaritic *bš* *n*, another name for Leviathan (1968, 145). However, the appearance of ‘Bashan’ here is most likely equivalent to that in v. 17, the ‘mountain of the gods’. ‘Bashan’ and the depths of the sea represent the two extremes to which the enemies of Yahweh might flee, and from which he has the power to capture and destroy them (Day 1985, 118).

¹¹⁵ Fokkelman 1990, 79.

Yahweh's supreme exaltation over all cosmic enemies is emphasized, since not even these great forces can provide protection to his earthly enemies.

In Ps 68:12-24, Yahweh the victorious Warrior leads the procession to his heavenly throne after vanquishing his foes in the conquest of Canaan. He has demonstrated his exalted position as king of heaven by his victories over his enemies—earthly and cosmic—and now he dwells eternally on his heavenly throne.

The pattern of divine warfare:

Conflict-Victory (vv. 12-15, 21-24)

Kingship (v. 19)

Procession (v. 19)

Housebuilding (Yahweh ascends his throne) (vv. 16-19)

Celebration (Yahweh receives the praise of his people) (vv. 20-21)

Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is included here because of the combination of kingship and divine warfare imagery within it, as well as the important role it plays in Ephesians.¹¹⁶ The psalm consists of two oracles, the first in vv. 1-3, the second in vv. 4-7. Each is preceded by a formula that typically introduces prophetic oracles.¹¹⁷

The first oracle is introduced by the phrase **אָמַר יְהוָה** ('the oracle of Yahweh') and addresses the Davidic king, designated as **יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ** ('[to] my lord'). The king is told to sit at the right hand (**יְמִינִי**) of Yahweh, which is a position of honour. The imagery depicts the king ruling as the direct appointee of Yahweh, having Yahweh's authority conferred on him.¹¹⁸

The king is then told what Yahweh will do for him in vv. 1b-3. Yahweh will subjugate kings and nations to his appointed king.¹¹⁹ He will make the enemies of the king a 'stool for his feet' (**סִבְיָה לְרַגְלֵי יְהוָה**), which is an image of

¹¹⁶ For discussion of issues related to dating and occasion, see Kraus 1989, 2:346-47; Bowker 1967, 31-41; Eaton 1986, 124-25. The psalm was most likely used at the coronation of the Davidic kings and spoken by a prophet, but there is little agreement among scholars beyond this (Broyles 1999, 414; Eaton 1986, 124-25).

¹¹⁷ Mays 1994a, 350; Weiser 1963, 693.

¹¹⁸ VanGemeren 1991, 5:696-97; Dahood 1970, 114.

¹¹⁹ The activity of Yahweh is emphasized here, as he acts alone on behalf of the king (Allen 1983, 86).

submission in the ancient world (v. 1b).¹²⁰ Yahweh gives universal dominion to his king as he sends forth the king's scepter (מַטֵּה עֲנִי) from Zion.¹²¹ Here again, the stress is on Yahweh waging warfare on behalf of the king. The imperative 'rule' (רַד) indicates the decree of Yahweh that his king will have dominion from Zion 'in the midst of your foes' (בְּקֶרֶב אֹיְבֶיךָ) (v. 2b).¹²²

In v. 3a, the peoples' glad volunteering behind the king for battle on 'the day of his strength' (בְּיוֹם חִיּוֹתָיִךָ) is a gift of Yahweh.¹²³ The text of 3b is notoriously difficult and each phrase is highly disputed. It may be a description of the hosts who have volunteered in support of the king,¹²⁴ a description of the glory of the king,¹²⁵ or an elaboration of the sonship of the king to Yahweh.¹²⁶ Brown's rendering conveys a 'sense of directed movement' so that the king 'is commanded to go forth from the womb toward the dawn, suggesting perhaps a rite of passage' in the coronation liturgy:

In holy splendor, out of the womb, towards the dawn go forth!
Like [the] dew, I have begotten you.¹²⁷

The second oracle opens with the phrase נִשְׁבַּע יְהוָה ('Yahweh has sworn'), which is strengthened by the pledge that he יִנָּחֵם אֶל ('and will not change his mind') (v. 4a). He solemnly confers on the Davidic king the office of priest. This priesthood, however, is not an inherited one, but is more like

¹²⁰ 'Egyptian representations show the pharaoh with his feet on a footstool, depicting enemies or even enemies serving as footstools themselves' (Cornelius 1997, 1:1011). Originally, a victorious king placed his feet on the necks of his vanquished foes (cf. Josh 10:24; 1 Kgs 5:3; Isa 51:23), from which practice arose the idiom 'to make one's enemy one's footstool' (VanGemeren 1991, 5:697).

¹²¹ Booi 1991, 397.

¹²² Anderson 1972, 2:769.

¹²³ There is a slight allusion to the Song of Deborah, where the 'people offered themselves willingly' (Judg 5:2) (Kidner 1975, 2:394).

¹²⁴ VanGemeren 1991, 5:697-98; Allen 1983, 86.

¹²⁵ Brown 1998, 96.

¹²⁶ Kraus 1989, 2:346; Broyles 1999, 414-15; Eaton 1967, 261-62.

¹²⁷ Brown 1998, 95-96. In v. 3b, Brown opposes the emendation of בְּהַרְרִי ('in splendor') to בְּהַרְרִי ('on the mountains'), arguing that the Masoretic text is the more difficult reading morphologically, though he admits that the exact force of הַרְרִי is elusive (96). He retains the Masoretic consonants מִשְׁחָר and assumes a preposition, thus מִן מִשְׁחָר, with the preposition מִן indicating 'the place or direction in which something is to be found, in this case the dawn' (94). He proposes a slight emendation of the consonants of לִךְ מִלֵּךְ to either לִךְ בְּמִלֵּךְ or לִךְ בְּמִלֵּךְ ('go forth like [the] dew') assuming an early corruption due to haplography, thus losing the second *kaph* (95-96). The final word of the line he reprints לִדְהִיךְ ('I have begotten you'), as is commonly suggested (95).

Melchizedek's (עַל־דְּבָרָתִי מֶלֶךְ־צִדְקָה), 'after the order/on the model of Melchizedek'), which was conferred on him by an oath.¹²⁸

Divine warfare imagery fills verses 5-7, as Yahweh goes to war in order to bring the whole earth (עַל־אֶרֶץ רְבָהָה, v. 6b) under submission to his king.¹²⁹ In a shift of imagery from the throne to the battlefield, Yahweh is now at the 'right hand' of the king, fighting on his behalf. Yahweh is referred to here as אֲדֹנָי ('Adonai'), which was used of the king in v. 1, emphasizing the unity of their efforts and the closeness of the Davidic king to Yahweh.¹³⁰

There is a shift within vv. 5-7 from second to third person, raising the issue of who is being addressed. Some see Yahweh as addressee in vv. 5-7, so that he carries out the destruction of the king's enemies for him.¹³¹ Yet Gilbert and Pisano have argued convincingly that the Davidic king is in view throughout vv. 5-7. In v. 5a, the prophet addresses himself to the king as he is about to undertake the conquest spoken of in vv. 1-2. The prophet assures him of the assistance of Yahweh ('the Lord is at your right hand'). Then, in vv. 5b-7, the prophet turns to a vision of the future as the king carries out the battle. He still is referring to the Davidic king, but now in the third person.¹³²

The destruction and judgment carried out by the king is recorded in vv. 6-7. The king 'shatters' (שָׁחַץ) enemy kings (5b) as well as the 'chief men' (רָאשֵׁי) of enemy nations (6b). The graphic imagery of v. 6a depicts the king carrying out the judgment of Yahweh, as he 'fills' the nations 'with corpses' (מִלֵּא גְוִיּוֹת). The scope of the dominion and victory gained by the king—assisted by Yahweh—is world-wide, as v. 6b notes (עַל־אֶרֶץ רְבָהָה, 'over a broad earth').¹³³

According to v. 7, the king will 'drink from a brook by the way' (יִשְׁתֶּה מִמַּנְחַל בַּדֶּרֶךְ). Because of this drink (עַל־כֵּן, 'therefore'), the king 'will lift his head' (יָרִים רֹאשׁוֹ) in triumph. This enigmatic reference may be to a ceremonial drink that the king would have taken at his coronation, or it may refer to a drink of

¹²⁸ Paul 1987, 209; Allen 1983, 81.

¹²⁹ Booi 1991, 403.

¹³⁰ Allen 1983, 86.

¹³¹ Allen 1983, 87; Kraus 1989, 2:351-52.

¹³² Gilbert and Pisano 1980, 349.

¹³³ Booi 1991, 404.

refreshment that the king takes during the battle. Either way, it appears to signify the king's confidence in Yahweh and his being strengthened by him.¹³⁴

In Psalm 110, Yahweh promises to give universal dominion to the Davidic king, who is installed as Yahweh's vice-regent in Zion. Yahweh's ultimate kingship—lying behind the authority of the earthly king—is demonstrated in his ability to carry this out, to make his king's enemies a stool for his feet. As the king goes to war, he is guaranteed victory, since Yahweh the Divine Warrior is at his side, fighting for him.

The pattern of divine warfare:

Kingship (vv. 1-2)

Housebuilding (the king will reign in Zion) (v. 2)

Conflict-Victory (vv. 5-7)

Celebration (v. 3)

Examples from Texts Related to Asia Minor

We have seen thus far that the pattern of divine warfare was common in the ANE and appears throughout the OT. In our final section, we will demonstrate that there was also a vibrant awareness of this mythology in Asia Minor in the first century, since it is widely agreed that though Ephesians may not have been addressed to Ephesus, its destination was almost certainly somewhere in Asia.¹³⁵ While there are a number of NT texts we could bring to bear in this effort,¹³⁶ we will focus on the appearance of the pattern in the Book of Revelation, which was addressed to a number of different churches throughout Asia Minor, such as Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7) and Laodicea (3:14-22), the two cities most commonly linked with the letter known as Ephesians. That the author of Revelation could be confident that the utilization of this myth would have resonated strongly with his readers in Asia is a valid assumption in light of the appearance of the myth on the central religious temple in Pergamon, the outer frieze of the Great Altar. Significantly, the church in Pergamon is one of the churches addressed by the author of Revelation (2:12-17), so that they certainly would have understood the author's employment of the combat myth. Further,

¹³⁴ VanGemeren 1991, 5:699; Booij 1991, 404-405.

¹³⁵ Best 1993, 15; Muddiman 2001, 34-36; Van Kooten 2003, 1-3; Schwindt 2002, 55-62.

¹³⁶ The divine combat myth is also utilized in other portions of the NT. For its use in John 5 see Huie-Jolly 1997, 191-217. For its utilization throughout the Gospels, see Longman and Reid 1995, 91-135.

that familiarity with the combat myth would have extended beyond Pergamon to other cities in Asia Minor is clear from the high level of contact between the cities in this region.¹³⁷ In this section, therefore, we will examine the pattern of divine warfare as it appears in the Book of Revelation and the outer frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon.

Revelation 6:9-7:17

The Book of Revelation is an apocalyptic text written in the last decade of the first century. In it, John the seer beholds a series of eschatological visions in which the purposes and activities of God in history are revealed in order to bring comfort to the followers of Jesus who are suffering persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire, and to warn against compromise with this evil world system.

Revelation 6 initiates a new section in the book, the breaking of the seven seals, the first four of which are broken in 6:1-8. With the breaking of the fifth seal by the Lamb in v. 9, a new perspective is introduced, and the threatening situation is developed (6:9-11).¹³⁸ John sees the souls of those who had been martyred under the altar, which represents their being protected by God under his heavenly throne.¹³⁹ In a scene which has a number of parallels to other apocalyptic texts, the souls of the martyrs cry out to God to vindicate their deaths and to come in his eschatological judgment.¹⁴⁰ The martyrs are given white robes, symbolizing their purity and their vindication as righteous by God, regardless of the verdict which the world may have rendered against them.¹⁴¹ They are then told to wait until the full number of martyrs has been completed, indicating that the persecution is not only ongoing, but will continue.

In 6:12-17, John sees the Lamb break open the sixth seal which unleashes an earthquake followed by further cosmic upheaval indicating the appearance of God to conduct holy war.¹⁴² The symbolism contained in this passage is drawn from a variety of OT texts, most of which refer to Yahweh as the Divine Warrior

¹³⁷ Cf. Kampmann's study of *homonoia* pacts between the cities of Asia Minor (1998, 373-93).

¹³⁸ Yarbro Collins 1976, 217.

¹³⁹ Beale 1999, 391; Aune 1998, 424.

¹⁴⁰ Roloff 1993, 89; Bauckham 1993a, 48-56. 'Inhabitants of the earth' designates the enemies of Christ throughout the book of Revelation (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10 [2x]; 13:8, 14 [2x]) (Aune 1998, 410; Harrington 1993, 93).

¹⁴¹ Caird 1966, 101; Beasley-Murray 1974, 136. Contra Murphy 1998, 211.

¹⁴² Bauckham 1993a, 199; Sweet 1979, 145.

judging sinful nations by sending one nation to defeat another (Isa 13:10-13; 34:4; Ezek 32:6-8; Joel 2:10, 30-31; 3:15-16; Hab 3:6-11).¹⁴³ In response, all of mankind, regardless of class (v. 15) flees to escape ‘the presence of him who sits on the throne and from wrath of the Lamb’ (v. 16).¹⁴⁴

The conflict and victory of the saints is portrayed in 7:1-12. Verses 4-8 describe those who receive the seal—τοὺς δούλους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν (‘the slaves of our God’ v. 3)—as an army ready to conduct holy war.¹⁴⁵ This battle is fought in an ironic manner, however, in that victory is achieved by maintaining their faith through suffering and death.¹⁴⁶ The victory is announced in v. 9 as those who were sealed are now seen standing before the throne of the Lamb wearing the white robes of victory and vindication, and waving palm branches, a symbol of triumph over an enemy.¹⁴⁷ A shout goes up from the great multitude in v. 10, ascribing the victory (σωτηρία) to the Divine Warrior, a scene which is typical of the holy war tradition.¹⁴⁸ This is followed by the angels, the elders and the four living creatures giving praise to God for his supreme power (vv. 11-12).

These ascriptions of praise are followed by the worship and celebration of the people of God in his temple (vv. 13-17). God is exalted on his throne after his triumph and his people now ‘serve him day and night’ while he spreads ‘his tabernacle over them’. The imagery is that of the Feast of Tabernacles which celebrated the joy of the presence of God and his protection of Israel in the wilderness.¹⁴⁹ The celebration here is for the protection of God through the tribulation of persecution.¹⁵⁰ Just as the worshipers gathered at the temple were blessed by Yahweh (e.g., Pss 24:5; 29:11), so too God blesses those who worship him and who have been faithful, triumphing through the persecution (vv. 16-17).¹⁵¹

¹⁴³ Beale 1999, 397.

¹⁴⁴ In a passage which highlights the paradoxical nature of the victory of the martyrs, Harrington points out the deliberate paradox of the phrase ‘the wrath of the Lamb’ (1993, 96).

¹⁴⁵ Bauckham 1993a, 216; Beale 1999, 422. The sealing (σφραγίζω, vv. 3, 4, 5, 8) is the mark of ownership and protection by God (Bauckham 1993a, 216; Schüssler Fiorenza 1991, 66).

¹⁴⁶ Beale 1999, 423.

¹⁴⁷ Beasley-Murray 1974, 145-46; Harrington 1993, 100.

¹⁴⁸ Bauckham 1993a, 226. The term σωτηρία has the meaning ‘deliverance, victory’, which often denotes eschatological victory in Revelation (Aune 1998, 470).

¹⁴⁹ Sweet 1979, 151.

¹⁵⁰ Caird 1966, 100.

¹⁵¹ Contra Yarbrow Collins (1976, 218), who labels vv. 16-17 ‘fertility of the restored order’.

The pattern of divine warfare:

Threat (6:9-11)

Theophany (6:12-17)

Conflict-Victory (7:1-9)

Victory shout (7:10-12)

Kingship (7:10-12, 15)

Resumption of rule on throne (House-building) (7:10-11, 15)

Celebration (7:13-15)

Blessing (7:16-17)

Revelation 12:1-12

The pattern of divine warfare can also be clearly seen in Revelation 12. The mythic pattern forms the structure of the chapter and much of the imagery which appears here is drawn from this ancient myth, as well as related myths.¹⁵²

The threatening situation is introduced in vv. 1-4, where two characters appear ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ('in heaven'). First, John sees a woman in the pains of labor, about to give birth. Her description in v. 1 suggests that she represents Israel, the nation from which the Messiah arises.¹⁵³ Verses 3-4 introduce the figure of the δράκων μέγας πυρρός ('great red dragon'), which John continues to describe utilizing mythical imagery drawn from the OT and the ANE.¹⁵⁴ The image of the dragon typically is used of the enemies of God, whether Leviathan the sea-serpent (Isa 27:1), or enemy kings who persecute his people (Ps 89:10; Isa 30:7).¹⁵⁵ In v. 4, the dragon stands in front of the woman ready to devour the child as soon as he is born.

The woman gives birth to a male child who immediately is caught up πρὸς τὸν θεὸν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ ('to God and to his throne') (v. 5). The child is described in the language of Ps 2:9, as the one ὃς μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ ('who will shepherd all the nations with a rod of iron'). The birth and ascension of the Messiah does not merely refer to his death and resurrection, but, as Beasley-Murray puts it, to 'the entire Christ-event, as we term it'.¹⁵⁶ The woman then flees to the wilderness for protection, recalling

¹⁵² Aune 1998, 667; Bauckham 1993a, 196-98; 1993b, 89-90; Beasley-Murray 1974, 191-93; Yarbrough Collins 1976, 231-34; Schüssler Fiorenza 1991, 80.

¹⁵³ Murphy 1998, 282; Bauckham 1993b, 89.

¹⁵⁴ His description as 'red' here most likely indicates the mortal threat of death (Roloff 1993, 146).

¹⁵⁵ Beale 1999, 632-35; Caird 196, 150. See esp. Bauckham 1993a, 185-98.

¹⁵⁶ Beasley-Murray 1974, 200.

a number of other situations in which God protected and preserved his people (Exod 16; 1 Kgs 17:2-6).¹⁵⁷

Verses 7-9 depict the πόλεμος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ('war in heaven') between Michael with his angels and the dragon and his angels. The dragon along with his angels are overwhelmed and thrown from heaven, since there was no longer a place for them there (v. 8). After he is thrown to the earth, v. 9 reveals the identity of the dragon. He is ὁ καλούμενος Διάβολος καὶ ὁ Σατανᾶς ('the one who is called the devil and Satan'). The three-fold appearance of βάλλω as passives of divine activity indicates that God was the one who had defeated Satan and his angels, and the victory belongs to him, not solely to Michael and his angels.¹⁵⁸

The victory shout and acclamation of the sovereign kingship of God is proclaimed in vv. 10-12. According to v. 10, 'the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ' (ἡ σωτηρία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ Χριστοῦ αὐτοῦ) 'have now come' (ἄρτι ἐγένετο) 'because' (ὅτι) Satan 'has been thrown down' (ἐβλήθη). The kingship of God is vindicated by his victory over Satan, which also provides the basis for the victory of those who are faithful to God over the dragon (v. 11). For this reason (διὰ τοῦτο), all heaven and those who inhabit it are called upon to rejoice in God's victory (v. 12).

The pattern of divine warfare:

Threat (12:1-4)

Salvation (12:5-6)

Conflict (12:7)

Victory (12:8-9)

Victory shout (12:10-12)

Kingship (12:10)

Housebuilding (12:10)

Celebration (12:12)

Revelation 16:12-19

This section depicts the pouring out of the sixth and seventh bowl judgments. The vision that follows the pouring out of the sixth bowl describes the preparations for a great battle in which the beast leads the armies from the east

¹⁵⁷ Roloff, 1993, 147.

¹⁵⁸ Aune 1998, 695; Harrington 1993, 132.

(vv. 12-16).¹⁵⁹ The bowl is poured out on the Euphrates, drying it up, so that the kings of the east may cross over to wage war against Rome—imagery that Aune calls the ‘typological antithesis of the Exodus from Egypt’.¹⁶⁰ The plague accompanying the sixth bowl is the spread of foul, demonic spirits that issue from the mouths of the evil trio of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (v. 13).

These πνεύματα δαιμονίων (‘spirits of demons’) go out to deceive the kings of the whole world in order to gather them together at Ἀρμαγεδών (‘Armageddon’). This place (lit., ‘mount of Megiddo’) is not to be identified with any literal location, but rather ‘represents the mythical apocalyptic-world mountain where the forces hostile to God, assembled by demonic spirits, will gather for final battle against God and his people’.¹⁶¹ This war is called τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος (‘the war of the great day of God, the Almighty’), and the appellation τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ παντοκράτορος (‘God the Almighty’) here represents the Hebrew יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת (‘God of hosts/armies’), the name for God which identifies him as the Divine Warrior.¹⁶²

The victory shout is given in v. 17 after the pouring out of the seventh bowl judgment. Initiating a series of theophanic images, the voice of God comes from the throne of the temple saying γέγονεν (‘it is done’).¹⁶³

The cosmic upheaval described in vv. 18-21 reflects the coming of the Divine Warrior in judgment, warring against his enemies. Lightning and thunder appear frequently as the weapons of the storm theophany, which follows naturally after the mention of the ‘voice’ of God in v. 17 (cf. Pss 18:14, 15; 29:3).¹⁶⁴ This is followed by an earthquake which is described in superlative terms (τηλικοῦτος σεισμὸς οὕτω μέγας, ‘so great and so mighty’), signifying the consummation of God’s judgment.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ On the identification of the beast with Nero, see Bauckham 1993a, 384-452.

¹⁶⁰ Aune 1998, 890-891.

¹⁶¹ Aune 1998, 898; see also Beale 1999, 839-41; Beasley-Murray 1974, 245-46

¹⁶² Sweet 1979, 249.

¹⁶³ Roloff 1993, 191-92; Murphy 1998, 347. That it is the voice of God is indicated by its having come from ἐκ τοῦ ναοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θρόνου (‘from the temple from the throne’) (Beale 1999, 842).

¹⁶⁴ Yarbro Collins 1976, 220.

¹⁶⁵ Beale 1999, 842; Bauckham 1993a, 205.

In the midst of the theophany, the element of conflict and victory appears in compressed form (v. 19) as God destroys Babylon (i.e., Rome), pouring out τοῦ οἴνου τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ ('the wine of the wrath of his anger').¹⁶⁶ The theophanic imagery continues in vv. 20-21 where the trembling of creation at the appearance of God in judgment is pictured by the islands and the mountains disappearing and huge hailstones raining down ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ('from heaven') upon the enemies of God.

The pattern of divine warfare:

Threat (16:12-16)

Victory shout (16:17)

Theophany (16:18, 20-21)

Conflict-victory (16:19)

Kingship (12:17, 19)

Housebuilding (12:17)

The Frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon

The pattern of divine warfare also is utilized in the outer frieze of the Great Altar of Pergamon. Constructed during the first half of the 2nd century B.C.E.,¹⁶⁷ the Frieze may have been part of a cultural effort by Pergamon to demonstrate that it was a bastion of civilization against barbarism and to bolster its standing over against Ptolemaic Alexandria.¹⁶⁸ While many points about the interpretation of the frieze are unresolved, it is clear that the subject is a great battle between the gods and the Giants.¹⁶⁹ The latter are depicted in the frieze as physically abnormal, deformed, and bestial, representing the forces of chaos, vice, and ugliness.¹⁷⁰ They seek to overthrow the gods, pressing their attack in all the regions ruled by them, which extends to the entire cosmos.

The gods are led by Zeus and represent order, virtue, reason, and beauty.¹⁷¹ Present in the frieze are the gods who represent the sea, the passage of time, the cycle of day and night, and life and death.¹⁷² In the battle, the gods have the upper

¹⁶⁶ Yarbro Collins 1976, 221.

¹⁶⁷ Stewart 1993, 131; Kästner 1998, 140.

¹⁶⁸ Pollitt 1986, 81-82.

¹⁶⁹ Yarbro Collins 1998, 181; Stewart 1993, 153-72. Simon argues that the Stoic philosopher Krates of Mallos was influential in the design of the Altar, so that it must be interpreted in light of Stoic thought (1975, 56-59). According to Pfanner, the frieze is arranged geographically so that the gods find their place on the frieze according to their region (1979, 46-57).

¹⁷⁰ Stewart 1993, 155.

¹⁷¹ Stewart 1993, 160.

¹⁷² Yarbro Collins 1998, 182.

hand, though the frieze contains some gods who are clearly overmatched.¹⁷³ The purpose of the depiction of the war between the Giants and the gods is to exalt the virtue and supremacy of the gods—they reign supreme by having defeated the forces of chaos, providing for the maintenance of the present order. Politically, the frieze is meant to exalt the Attalid regime as the earthly manifestation of the might of the gods, preserving the civil order by holding back the forces of barbarism and chaos.¹⁷⁴

The outer frieze of the Great Altar, therefore, represents another example—strategic for our purposes—of the utilization of the pattern of divine warfare in the first century in Asia Minor. The gods preserve order against the forces of chaos, and, having defeated their enemies, deserve to be recognized as universal sovereigns.

The pattern of divine warfare:

Threat (by the grotesque Giants, the forces of chaos)

Conflict (between the gods and the Giants)

Victory (by the gods over the Giants)

Kingship (of the gods is recognized)

House-building (the building of the altar in honor of the triumphant gods)

Celebration (by the people loyal to the gods who come to the altar to worship)

Conclusion

The pattern of divine warfare was common throughout the ANE and utilized to great effect up to, and including, the first century. Further, there was great awareness of this combat myth in Asia Minor, as it was utilized not only on the outer frieze of the Great Altar in Pergamon, but also by the author of the Book of Revelation in writing to churches in Asia Minor. The writer of Ephesians, therefore, could also assume that his employment of this mythological tool would have resonated with his readers in the church(es) to which he wrote. In the following chapters, we will demonstrate how this pattern of divine warfare animates the argument of the writer regarding the triumph of God in Christ over his enemies.

¹⁷³ Stewart 1993, 159-60.

¹⁷⁴ Stewart 1993, 165-66.

CHAPTER 3

ENSLAVEMENT TO COSMIC POWERS

IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Introduction

The pattern of divine warfare and the celebration of the people loyal to the triumphant deity raises the question as to the enemies over whom the deity has triumphed. Many of the ancient texts that utilize the pattern of divine warfare depict the triumph of the deity over the forces of chaos threatening the created order. The triumphant deity is praised as the one who ensures cosmic order and protection from hostile forces.

As C. Arnold has demonstrated, the powers and authorities play a prominent role in Ephesians, appearing here not only more often than in any other Pauline letter, but also at strategic points throughout the argument (1:20-23; 3:10; 4:8; 6:12). In order to grasp the crucial role these figures play in Ephesians we must examine more carefully the cultural milieu in which Ephesians originally would have been heard. The rhetoric of the ‘powers and authorities’ in Ephesians would have resonated across all traditions in the ancient world because of the pervasive sense of enslavement to cosmic powers.¹ That is, at the very core of all ancient conceptions of reality is the conviction that the world is governed by supra-human cosmic figures that must be manipulated in some way in order to negotiate one’s way through various aspects of life—such as relationships, family honor, and economic interests—and to provide security and stability in one’s daily existence. As Lichtenberger notes, in the ancient world ‘spirits and demons were frequently thought to influence people toward certain ends. A broad stream of traditions in the ancient world testifies precisely to the frequency of this conviction in the ancient world’.²

In order to demonstrate this pervasive notion, we will examine selected evidence from a broad spectrum; first from the magical papyri from the ancient world, then two Greco-Roman intellectual leaders, and finally, Jewish tradition.³

¹ Kotansky 2000, 269; Lichtenberger 2004, 14; Arnold 1992, 27.

² Lichtenberger 2004, 14.

³ What follows is merely a representative sample of several traditions in the ancient world. To give a full account of this sense of enslavement to cosmic powers would require several monographs, at least.

Magical Papyri

The collection of what has come to be known as the magical papyri from the ancient world is an important witness to the common folk belief of the first century.⁴ This collection of texts contains instructions for the construction of amulets or charms that would have been written on broken shards of pottery, papyrus, wax, pieces of lead, or other materials. Their purpose was to ward off evil spirits, to provide protection from harm, to capture the affections of a man or woman, to achieve victory in chariot races, to succeed in business ventures, and to secure protection from the malevolent curses of others. These texts demonstrate clearly that the average person conceived of her/his world as governed by cosmic entities that had the power to adjust the course of reality for good or ill.

The ancient worldview, according to Jeffers, was a 'cosmic consciousness based on a system of correspondences between heaven and earth', so that magic is 'the harnessing of cosmic forces. . . In a universe threatened by chaos, mankind expresses its wish for order (or disorder) by acting on the earth; the consequences of this action have their correspondence in heaven'.⁵ As Kee notes, the petitions included in these texts do not have the purpose of inquiring about the divine will, but seek, rather, 'to shape the deity's will to do the bidding of the one making the demand or to defeat the aims of the evil powers'.⁶ In the survey that follows, the perceived role that supra-human powers played in relation to both the mundane events and significant turning points in the lives of people in the ancient world will be demonstrated.

One text, *PGM VII. 579-90*, contains instructions for a charm or amulet of some sort in order to ward off demons that might cause suffering or sickness.

A phylactery, a bodyguard against daimons, against phantasms, / against every sickness and suffering, to be written on a leaf of gold or silver or tin or on hieratic papyrus. When worn it works mightily for it is the name of

⁴ Arnold 2000, 666. Many of these texts are from as late as the fourth century C.E., but at least one text can be dated as early as the fourth century B.C.E., and a few others to the first century C.E. Further, the similarities between these quite early texts and those which have later dates indicates that these papyri accurately represent common perceptions in the first century C.E. (Brashear 1995, 3420; Arnold 2000, 667; Gager 1992, 3-5; Kee 1986, 101-102).

⁵ Jeffers 1996, 3. Aune notes that the distinction between magic and religion is difficult to discern (Aune 1980, 1513). Meyer and Smith object to the prejudicial language that has been used to discuss these texts, preferring to call them 'texts of ritual power' (Meyer and Smith 1994, 1-6).

⁶ Kee 1986, 112.

power of the great god and [his] seal, and it is as follows: . . . [divine names] . . . These [are] the names; the figure is like this: let the Snake be biting its tail, the names being written inside [the circle made by] the snake, and the characters thus, as follows. . .

The whole figure is [drawn] thus, as given below, with [the spell], “Protect my body, [and] the / entire soul of me, NN.” And when you have consecrated [it], wear [it].

PGM XVIIIb. 1-7 contains a plea for general healing: ‘I conjure you all by the sacred name to heal Dionysius or Anys, whom Heraklia bore, from every shivering fit and fever, whether daily or intermittent [fever] by night or day, or quartan fever, immediately, immediately, quickly, quickly’.⁷

PGM XXXVI. 211-30 contains a plea for general success and for protection against the negative effects of charms or spells against oneself by others:

Prayer to Helios: A charm to restrain anger and for victory and for securing favor (none is greater): Say to the sun (Helios) [the prayer] 7 times, and anoint your hand with oil and wipe it on your head and face.

Now [the prayer] is: ‘Rejoice with me, you who are set over the east wind / and the world, for whom all the gods serve as bodyguards at your good hour and on your good day, you who are the Good Daimon of the world, the crown of the inhabited world, you who rise from the abyss, you who each day rise a young man and set an old man, . . . [divine names]. I beg you, lord, do not allow me to be overthrown, to be plotted against, to receive dangerous drugs, to go into exile, to fall upon hard times. Rather, I ask to obtain and receive from you life, health, reputation, wealth, influence, strength, success, charm, / favor with all men and all women, victory over all men and all women. Yes, lord, . . . [divine names] . . . , accomplish the matter which I want, / by means of your power’.

Quite common among the magical papyri are spells that are intended to procure the affections of a man or woman,⁸ as in *PGM VII*. 619-27:

Take the plant snapdragon and hold it under your tongue while lying asleep. And rise early and before you speak to anyone recite the names, and you will be invisible to everyone.

But when you say them over drinking cups and give them to a woman, she will love you, since this spell has power over everything: . . . [divine names].

⁷ A number of other papyri include spells or pleas to do away with headaches (*PGM XVIIIa*. 1-4; *PGM XX*. 1-4).

⁸ Gager rightly notes that these are perhaps not best labelled ‘love charms’ since strikingly violent and aggressive imagery is often present (Gager 1992, 80-81). Since a common thread in these magical spells, generally speaking, is the constraining of others’ wills to be bent according to one’s own, it is not surprising that this same dynamic is found in this arena of human relationships.

For what you wish, say: “Get her, NN, for me, NN” (add the usual, whatever you wish).⁹

Another such spell is found in *PGM XXXIIa*. 1-25, which is an appeal to a number of deities, for the affections of a woman named Amoneios:

As Typhon is the adversary of Helios, so inflame the heart and soul of that Amoneios whom / Helen bore, even from her own womb, ADŌNAI ABRASAX PINOUTI and SAVAŌS; burn the soul and heart of that Amoneios whom Helen / bore, for [love of] this Seapiakos whom Threpte bore, now, now; quickly, quickly.

In this same hour and on this same day, from this [moment] on, mingle / together the souls of both and cause that Amoneios whom Helen bore to be this Seapiakos whom / Threpte bore, through every hour, every day and every night. Wherefore, ADŌNAI, loftiest of gods, whose name is the true / one, carry out the matter, ADŌNAI.

In another ‘love’ spell, contained in *PGM IV*. 1390-1495, appeal is made to a variety of figures who inhabit the realm of the dead, specifically ‘heroes or gladiators or those who have died a violent death’ (1390-95). The one who was attempting to secure the affections of another was to eat some bread, without consuming the whole loaf, breaking up the rest into seven bite-size pieces. The spell was to be spoken to the pieces of bread, which then were to be thrown toward the house. Finally, the one casting the spell was to ‘pick up some polluted dirt from the place where you perform the ritual and throw it inside the house of the woman whom you desire, go on home and go to sleep’ (1395-1400). After the spell is laid out, the following instructions are given:

When you have done / these things for 3 days and accomplish nothing, then use this forceful spell: just go to the same place and again perform the ritual of the bread pieces. Then upon ashes of flax offer up dung / from a black cow and say this and again pick up the polluted dirt and throw it as you have learned’ (1435-40).

At the end of another love spell of attraction, which was supposed to be written on an unbaked piece of pottery, and appeal was made to Hekate, instructions are given to write ‘8 figures like this...’ (*PGM XXXVI*. 200). After a divine name is mentioned, a number of figures appear, which seem to contain within them further divine names that appear elsewhere in the papyri.

⁹ It is also obvious from this text that the lists of divine names in the papyri are, as Kee notes, ‘ecumenical and extensive’, including Jewish and Christian divine names (Kee 1986, 107).

There are a small number of lesbian love spells contained in the papyri. *PGM XXXII*. 1-19 contains the plea of a woman named Herais for the love of Sarapias. What is striking about her plea is that she seeks to coerce the deity to action by appeal to other deities.

I adjure you, Evangelos, by Anubis and Hermes¹⁰ and all the rest down below; attract and bind / Sarapias whom Helen bore, to this Herais, whom Thermoutharin bore, now, now; quickly, quickly. By her soul and heart / attract Sarapias herself, whom [Helen] bore from her own womb, MAEI OTE ELBŌSATOK ALAUBĒTŌ ŌEIO . . . AĒN.¹¹ Attract and [bind / the soul and heart of Sarapias], whom [Helen bore, to this] Herais, [whom] Thermoutharin [bore] from her womb [now, now; quickly, quickly].

This is not entirely uncommon, however, since *PGM XII*. 134-44 contains the threat that if the demon does not do as he is asked, he will be reported to the Most High God and will be hacked to pieces.

O sacred names of the god, listen to me—you also O Good Daimon, whose might is very great / among the gods, listen to me: go to him, NN, into his house, where he sleeps, into his bedroom, and stand beside him, causing fear, trembling, by using the great and mighty names of the god. And tell him such-and-such.

I conjure you [by] your power, [by] the great do, SĒITH, [by] the hour in which you were begotten a great god, [by] the god revealing it now, [by] the 365 names of the great god, to go to him, NN, this very hour, this very night, and to tell / him in a dream such-and-such.

If you disobey me and don't go to him, NN, I will tell the great god, and after he has speared you through, he will chop you up into pieces and feed your members to the mangy dog who lies among the dungheaps. For this reason, listen to me immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly, so I won't have to tell you again.

Such coercion is seen again in *PGM IV*. 1520-1540. Here the spell calls on Myrrh but also appeals to a number of more coercive and stronger 'names':

Rather, let her hold me / NN alone in her mind; let her desire me alone; let her love me alone; let her do all my wishes. Do not enter through her eyes or through her side or through her nails / or even through her navel or through her frame, but rather through her 'soul'. And remain in her heart and burn her guts, her breast, her liver, / her breath, her bones, her marrow,

¹⁰ Hermes is by far the most common deity invoked in these ritual texts, followed by Hekate and a few others (Gager 1992, 12).

¹¹ These long series of unintelligible words that are found throughout these texts may be divine names or words that were thought to have been intelligible only to the powers being invoked. A more accurate understanding of these words continues to elude scholars (Brashear 1995, 3434; Gager 1992, 9-10).

until she comes to me NN, loving me, and until she fulfils al my wishes, because I adjure you, Myrrh, by the three names, / ANOCHŌ ABRASAX TRŌ, and by the more coercive and stronger names KORMEIŌTH IAŌ SABAŌTH ADŌNAI, so that you may carry out my / orders, Myrrh.¹²

There is also an emphasis on the correct recitation of spells in order for these to be effective. *PGM* XIII. 755-59 contains the exhortation:

Learn and conceal, child, the name [composed] of the nine letters, AEĒ EĒI OYŌ, and that of the fourteen letters, YSAU SIAUE IAŌUS, and that of the twenty-six letters, ARABBAOUARABA (to be written forwards and backwards), the name of Zeus, CHONAI IEMOI CHO ENI KA ABIA SKIBA PHOROUOM EPIERTHAT.

This is followed by the lines, ‘Here is the instruction [for recitation] of the heptagram, and the spell to which the god gives attention’ (XIII. 760).

PGM LIX. 1-15 includes the plea for protection of the mummified body of a departed relation:

You, slave of the [glorious] god ABLANATHANALBA, you servant of the [good] god AKRAMMACHAMAREI, you, slave of [IAEŌ] SABAŌ ABRASAX ADŌNAI, / you, servant of the [four] good [and] glorious gods, [divine names], / you, the good and glorious gods, protect the mummy and the body and all the grave of the younger Phtheious, who is also [called] Saioneis, whom Sentaesis bore . . . the everlasting [punishments given by] the Lady [Isis], / goddess of many names.

The tone appears to vary in these texts between plea/prayer and peremptory order, so that the line becomes difficult to draw between ‘religion’ and the practice of ‘magic’, as a number of scholars note.¹³ While in certain instances a person takes the position of pleading as a pious supplicant before the various deities, just as often the attitude ‘is that the divine powers are subject to human orders, and should be told so in no uncertain terms’.¹⁴ These texts demonstrate the

¹² Cf. also *PGM* XV. 1-19: “I am conjuring / you, daimons, by the force and fate that constrains you. Accomplish everything for me and rush in and take away the mind of Nīlos, to whom this magical material belongs, in order that he might love me . . . I conjure you daimons by your spiteful fates that hold you and by those carried by the wind [divine names]”.

¹³ According to Aune, it is false to claim that the distinction between magic and religion is the coercive nature of magic and the posture of the religious individual as suppliant and worshipful. He points to the variation in the magical papyri between supplication and coercion, along with the often coercive nature of religious worship on the part of many who seek to manipulate supernatural powers. ‘In terms of beliefs and practices, there appears to be no thoroughly convincing way of distinguishing magic from religion’ (Aune 1980, 1512-13). Cf. also Jeffers 1996, 2-3; Meyer and Smith 1994, 1-6.

¹⁴ Kee 1986, 109.

consciousness that the courses of lives on earth corresponded to the activity of supra-human figures in the heavens. Because of this, the cosmic forces that have some sort of control over human existence must be cajoled and manipulated for acceptable outcomes.¹⁵

Greco-Roman Intellectual Thought

Though magic was practiced mainly among the lower, uneducated classes,¹⁶ the sense of enslavement to cosmic powers transgressed social and class boundaries. Intellectual leaders throughout the Greco-Roman world understood their realities as determined and controlled by cosmic forces. For example, in his *Natural Histories*, a compendium of sorts of a wide range of natural phenomena, Pliny the Elder recounts the belief of the common mass of humanity in supernatural powers and the manipulation of their powers for effecting daily life. Pliny appears to approach reports of magical or ritual phenomena with a good bit of scepticism, almost to convince his reader of his reliably rationalistic approach to these matters. Yet he admits that ritual magic has a hold over the popular imagination that effects people in every stratum of society. He states that

the wisest of our fellow-men, I should remark, taken individually, refuse to place the slightest faith in these opinions. And yet, in our every-day life, we practically show, each passing hour, that we do entertain this belief, though at the moment we are not sensible of it. Thus, for instance, it is a general belief that without a certain form of prayer it would be useless to immolate a victim, and that, with such an informality, the gods would be consulted to little purpose. And then besides, there are different forms of address to the deities, one form for entreating, another form for averting their ire, and another for commendation (*Nat. Hist.* XXVIII.3).

He has an extensive discussion on the power of words and of various other ritual practices to effect the course of reality, such as the power of the spoken word, incantations, the power of bodily effluences, menstrual fluid, and the power of knots.¹⁷ He mentions, in this context, that Caesar, who had an accidental fall in his chariot on one occasion, ‘was always in the habit, immediately upon taking his seat, of thrice repeating a certain formula, with a view of ensuring safety upon the

¹⁵ Mills 1990, 24-25; Jeffers 1996, 3; Arnold 1989, 35.

¹⁶ Aune 1980, 1521.

¹⁷ Kee 1986, 102-108.

journey; a thing that, to my knowledge, is done by many persons at the present day' (XXVIII.4).

The notion that cosmic forces such as good and evil supra-human figures determine human existence is also found in Plutarch.¹⁸ He quotes with approval the assertion of Xenocrates that demons have a nature that is midway between humanity and the gods (*De defectu oraculorum* 416d). Further, Plutarch notes that Xenocrates and Chrysippus regard these great demons (δαίμόνων μεγάλων) as 'stronger than men and, in their might, greatly surpassing our nature, yet not possessing the divine quality unmixed and uncontaminated, but with a share also in the nature of the soul and in the perceptive faculties of the body' (*De Iside et Osiride* 360E).

In his *Lives*, Plutarch recounts at least two appearances of demonic spirits of some sort, one to Dion (*Dion* 55) and one to Brutus (*Brutus* 36). In the account of the apparition to Brutus, he is sitting in his tent at night and meditating and reflecting when he hears someone coming into the tent. He turns to behold a 'strange and dreadful apparition, a monstrous and fearful shape standing silently by his side'. Brutus, plucking up his courage, asks who this is, whether it is 'of gods or men'. The apparition answers him, 'I am your δαίμων κακός, Brutus, and you will see me at Philippi'.

He recounts the appearance to Dion along similar lines:

As the plot was ripening, Dion saw an apparition of great size and portentous aspect (μέγα καὶ τερατώδες). He was sitting late in the day in the vestibule of his house, alone and lost in thought, when suddenly a noise was heard at the other end of the colonnade, and turning his gaze in that direction he saw (for it was not yet dark) a woman of lofty stature, in garb and countenance exactly like a tragic Fury, sweeping the house with a sort of broom. He was terribly shocked, and, becoming apprehensive, summoned his friends, told them what he had seen, and begged them to remain and spend the night with him, being altogether beside himself, and fearing that if he were left alone the portent would appear to him again. . .

¹⁹

According to Plutarch, these appearances were to signal to the two men their approaching death (*Dion* 2). In answer to those who might doubt the reality

¹⁸ Hershbelle 2000, 812.

¹⁹ According to Brenk, this demon is some sort of avenger of evil, and the sweeping is a symbol of her imminent striking of the household of Dion in revenge for the murder of Heracleides (Brenk 1977, 108).

of such appearances, Plutarch notes that Dion and Brutus were extraordinary men, and if they recounted such things, others ought not to dismiss them so easily. He then states that these appearances are most likely

mean and malignant spirits (τὰ φαῦλα δαιμόνια καὶ βάσκανα), in envy of good men and opposition to their noble deeds, [trying] to confound and terrify them, causing their virtue to rock and totter, in order that they may not continue erect and inviolate in the path of honour and so attain a better portion after death than the spirits themselves (*Dion* 2).

Plutarch also claims that Caesar was helped throughout his career by some sort of powerful cosmic protector (μέντοι μέγας δαίμων) (*Caesar* 69). Even after he died, this cosmic overlord acted as an avenger, ‘driving and tracking down his slayers over every land and sea until not one of them was left’.

Affairs of state are also affected by cosmic or demonic powers, as Plutarch demonstrates in *De Fortuna Romanorum* 7. Plutarch records a time in which there were friendly meetings between Augustus and Antony, in which they engaged in various games, Antony always going down to defeat. Plutarch attributes this to Fortune and to her smiling specially upon Augustus. He goes on, however, to recount a story in which a friend of Augustus admonishes him to avoid further contact with Antony:

Your reputation is greater, you are older, you govern more men, you have fought in wars, you excel in experience but your Guardian spirit fears this man’s Spirit (ὁ σὸς δαίμων τὸν τοῦτου φοβεῖται). Your Fortune is mighty by herself, but abases herself before his. Unless you keep far away from him, your Fortune will depart and go over to him!

The pervasive sense of enslavement to cosmic powers reached to the upper echelons of first-century culture. No one was immune to the sense of humanity’s fate being subject to potentially malevolent forces beyond humanity’s control.

Early Judaism

The sense that human life was bounded and determined by supra-human powers such as angels and demons was also common in early Jewish thought.²⁰ According to the Jewish belief in angelic powers, God had delegated authority

²⁰ Collins 1987, 7; Rowland 1982, 91-92; Stone 1984, 384; Reddish 1990, 230.

over the nations to angelic beings, a tradition which has its roots in Deuteronomy 32:8-9:

When the most high gave the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of man, he set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods. For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the allotment of his inheritance.

This understanding was further developed in Daniel, where monstrous beasts represent empires (Dan 7:2-8). In Dan 10:13-21, the 'one like a man', along with Michael, fights with the 'Princes' of Greece and Persia.

The notion of the angelic powers over the nations is developed in Early Jewish literature, where the angelic powers have rebelled against God and now lead humanity astray into idolatry, among a variety of other sins.²¹

And he sanctified them (Israel) and gathered them from all of the sons of man because (there are) many nations and many people, and they all belong to him, but over all of them he caused spirits to rule so that they might lead them astray from following him. But over Israel he did not cause any angel or spirit to rule because he alone is their ruler and he will protect them and he will seek for them at the hand of his angels and at the hand of his spirits and at the hand of all of his authorities so that he might guard them and bless them and they might be his and he might be theirs henceforth and forever (*Jubilees* 15:31-32).

I Enoch narrates how rebellious angels left their place in heaven and came to earth to take women as their wives, to introduce to humanity heavenly secrets, and lead them into rebellion and sin against God. According to 8:1-4:

Azaz'el taught the people (the art of) making swords and knives, and shields, and breastplates; and he showed to their chosen ones bracelets, decorations, (shadowing of the eye) with antimony, ornamentation, the beautifying of the eyelids, all kinds of precious stones, and all coloring tinctures and alchemy. And there were many wicked ones and they committed adultery and erred, and all their conduct became corrupt. Amasras taught incantation and the cutting of roots; and Armaros the resolving of incantations; and Baraqiyah astrology, and Kokarar'el (the knowledge of) the signs, and Tam'el taught the seeing of the stars, and Asder'el taught the course of the moon as well as the deception of man.

These angels will be judged because they 'have taught injustice and because [they] have shown to the people deeds of shame, injustice, and sin' (13:2;

²¹ Longenecker 1998, 51.

cf. 64:1, 2; *Jub.* 4:22). The work of the angels in influencing humanity to sin is depicted in *1 Enoch* with special reference to idolatry:

And Uriel said to me, 'Here shall stand in many different appearances the spirits of the angels which have united themselves with women. They have defiled the people and will lead them into error so that they will offer sacrifices to the demons as unto gods, until the great day of judgment in which they shall be judged till they are finished (19:1).

In *1 Enoch* 69:1-15, the angels who sinned by wrongly revealing secrets to those who dwell on the earth, are named and judged. One of these is Gader'el:

This is the one who showed the children of the people all the blows of death, who misled Eve, who showed the children of the people (how to make) the instruments of death (such as) the shield, the breastplate, and the sword for warfare, and all (the other) instruments of death to the children of the people. Through their agency (death) proceeds against the people who dwell upon the earth from that day forevermore (69:6-8).

1 Enoch 56:1-4 depicts 'an army of the angels of punishment marching' in order to bring judgment on those angels who have led humanity astray. When these angels of punishment bring their judgment, 'the epoch of their lives, the era of their glory, and the age of their leading (others) astray shall come to an end and shall not henceforth be reckoned'.²²

It is not only these arch-angels that lead nations astray, but demons are at work on a more focused level to influence the behaviour of individuals, thus enslaving them to sin. In *Jubilees* 5:26-27, Noah speaks to his grandsons, blaming their misdeeds on the work of demons:

And behold, I see your deeds before me that you have not been ones who walked in righteousness because you have begun to walk in the paths of corruption. And each one of you will be separated from his neighbour. And this one will be jealous of that one, and (I see) that you will not be together, O my sons, each on with his brother. For I see, and behold, the demons have begun to mislead you and your children. And now I fear for your sakes that after I die, you will pour out the blood of men upon the earth.

²² It appears that one of the ways that these angelic rulers have led humanity astray is that they have set the orientation of the nations to reflect their own character. They are responsible for the spirit that characterizes national life among the nations. This is reflected in *1 Enoch* 48:7: 'And he [the Son of Man] has revealed the wisdom of the Lord of the Spirits to the righteous and the holy ones, for he has preserved the portion of the righteous because they have hated and despised this world of oppression (together with) all its ways of life and its habits in the name of the Lord of the Spirits; and because they will be saved in his name and it is his good pleasure that they have life'.

In a later passage, *Jubilees* 10:1-14, ‘the polluted demons began to lead astray the children of Noah’s sons and to lead them to folly and to destroy them’. Because of this, they came to Noah and ‘they told him about the demons who were leading astray and blinding and killing his grandchildren’. Noah prays on their behalf that the evil spirits would not rule over his children.

In *Jubilees* 12:19-20, Abram is depicted as praying to God:

My God, the Most High God, you alone are God to me. . . . Save me from the hands of evil spirits which rule over the thought of the heart of man, and do not let them lead me astray from following you, O my God; But establish me and my seed forever.²³

The godly person, however, may resist the influences of these demons. According to *T. Benjamin* 6:1, ‘the deliberations of the good man are not in the control of the deceitful spirit, Beliar, for the angel of peace guides his life’. *T. Issachar* 4 contains a poetic piece extolling the godly person: ‘And the spirits of error have no power over him, since he does not include feminine beauty in the scope of his vision, lest by allowing distraction he might corrupt his mind’ (v. 4).

Other portions of the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* portray the activity of demons in coercing people to sin, and they are seen to be operating under the authority of Satan, or Belial. In the *Testament of Reuben*, Reuben speaks ‘concerning the seven spirits of deceit. For seven spirits are established against mankind, and they are the sources of the deeds of youth. And seven other spirits are given to man at creation so that by them every deed is done’. After listing six of these spirits, Reuben then speaks of

the spirit of procreation and intercourse, with which come sins through fondness for pleasure. For this reason, it was the last in the creation and the first in youth, because it is filled with ignorance; it leads the young person like a blind man into a ditch and like an animal over a cliff (*T. Reub.* 2:1-9; cf. also 3:3; 6:3).

In the *Testament of Simeon*, Simeon speaks to his children about the spirit of deceit and envy: ‘Beware of the spirit of deceit and envy. For envy dominates

²³ Many Jewish texts have a multi-perspectival vision of human sin and sinfulness. As demonstrated above, they portray humans being tempted to sin and rebel against God by supra-human cosmic rulers and by demons subordinate to the rule of Satan, but they also portray humans as responsible for sin. For example, later in this prayer of Abram he prays, ‘Make the straight path prosper before you in the hand of your servant that he might serve. And do not let me walk in the error of my heart, O my God’ (*Jub.* 12:21).

the whole of man's mind and does not permit him to eat or drink or to do anything good. Rather it keeps prodding him to destroy the one whom he envies' (3:1-3). Out of fear of the Lord Simeon fasted for two years and found liberation from this spirit of envy. He then counsels his children: 'If anyone flees to the Lord for refuge, the evil spirit will quickly depart from him, and his mind will be eased' (3:6).

Early Jewish texts depict one central figure as the authority over all other evil angelic powers. Known by a variety of names, he is most commonly called 'Satan' or 'Belial'. In *Jub.* 11:4-6, evil spirits assist people in making idols and 'led them astray so that they might commit sin and pollution'. Satan is depicted as being behind this: 'And the prince, Mastema, acted forcefully to do all of this. And he sent other spirits to those who were set under his hand to practice all error and sin and all transgression' (11:5).

Jubilees also depicts Mastema as appealing to God in order to preserve for himself a demonic and angelic host:

And the Lord our God spoke to us so that we might bind all of them. And the chief of the spirits, Mastema, came and he said, "O Lord, Creator, leave some of them before me, and let them obey my voice. And let them do everything which I tell them, because if some of them are not left for me, I will not be able to exercise the authority of my will among the children of men because the evil of the sons of men is great." And he said, "Let a tenth of them remain before him, but let nine parts go down into the place of judgment" (10:7-9).

Throughout *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* evil spirits, such as the 'spirits of deceit', operate under the authority of Belial. According to *T. Dan.* 1:7-8, 'one of the spirits of Belial was at work within me, saying, "Take this sword, and with it kill Joseph; once he is dead, your father will love you". This is the spirit of anger...' Similarly, in *T. Sim.*, sin is blamed directly on the influence of Satan: 'I determined inwardly to destroy him (Joseph), because the Prince of Error blinded my mind so that I did not consider him as a brother nor did I spare Jacob, my father' (2:7).

The same dynamic is at work in *T. Dan.* 5:5-6:

To the extent that you abandon the Lord, you will live by every evil deed, committing the revolting acts of the gentiles, chasing after wives of lawless men, and you are motivated to all wickedness by the spirits of deceit among you. For I read in the Book of Enoch the Righteous that

your prince is Satan and that all the spirits of sexual promiscuity and of arrogance devote attention to the sons of Levi in the attempt to observe them closely and cause them to commit sin before the Lord.

This sense of enslavement to cosmic powers is also reflected in the Qumran literature. There is a sharp dualism between good and evil in these texts, and the present evil age is referred to as ‘the reign of Belial’, so that following the way of God may entail persecution (1QS 1.17-18, 23-24; 2.19). The radical dualism in the Qumran texts pits the ‘sons of righteousness’, ruled by the Prince of Lights, against those who live under the dominion of the Angel of Darkness. In contrast to the Prince of Lights, under whose authority and in whose way the sons of righteousness live,

in the hand of the Angel of Darkness (is) the dominion of the Sons of Deceit; and in the ways of darkness they walk. By the Angel of Darkness comes the aberration of all the Sons of Righteousness; and all their sons, their iniquities, their guilt, and their iniquitous works (are caused) by his dominion, according to God’s mysteries, until his end. And all their afflictions and the appointed times of their suffering (are caused) by the dominion of his hostility. And the spirits of his lot cause to stumble the Sons of Light; but the God of Israel and his Angel of Truth help all the Sons of Light (1QS 3.20-25).

The present age is understood as the reign of Belial, so that those who choose to join the community that produced the Qumran texts must commit to following the rules so that they will not stray ‘during the dominion of Belial’ (1QS 1.18). As part of the ritual practice of the community, ‘the Levites shall recite the sins of the children of Israel, all their blameworthy transgressions and their sins during the dominion of Belial (1QS 1.22-24; cf. also 2:19).

In the document known as *The War Scroll*, Belial, the chief ruler of evil forces, is depicted as holding humanity in captivity, along with controlling evil spirits who work directly among humans:

You created Belial for the pit,
angel of enmity;
his [dom]ain is in darkness,
his counsel is for evil and wickedness.
All the spirits of his lot
angels of destruction
walking in the laws of darkness;
towards them goes his only desire.

we, instead, in the lot of your truth,
rejoice in your might hand (1QM 13.11-12).

The fear of oppression and subjugation to demonic spirits is reflected in this plea for deliverance found in 11QPs 19.13-16. The psalmist prays for protection from unclean spirits, which were thought to emerge from Satan.²⁴

Pardon my sins, YHWH
and cleanse me from my iniquity.
Bestow on me a faithful and knowing spirit;
may I not be disgraced in the calamity.
May Satan not rule over me
or an unclean spirit;
may neither pain nor evil purpose
take possession of my bones.

In *The War Scroll* God is praised for his blessing and protection from Belial and his spirits:

In all our generations
you have caused your favours to fall on the rem[nant of our people]
during the empire of Belial.
In all the mysteries of his enmity,
they have not separated us from your covenant.
You have excluded from us
his spirits of destruction.
You have protected the soul of your redeemed ones
[when the m]en of his empire [were scheming] (1QM 14.9-10).

Conclusion

This survey of several traditions demonstrates the ubiquity of the sense of enslavement to cosmic powers in the ancient world. The common mass of humanity, along with the upper classes, would have understood their reality—their national security, their fate, their relationships, economic success, and daily well-being—to be bound and determined by supra-human cosmic powers that must be manipulated for one's well-being. Because of this, the language of 'powers and authorities' in Ephesians would have resonated with any audience.²⁵

²⁴ Flusser 1966, 205; Lichtenberger 2004, 18-19.

²⁵ Schwindt 2002, 392; Yoder Neufeld 1997, 122; Lincoln 1990, 63-64; Leivestad 1954, 160-61.

CHAPTER 4

THE TRIUMPHS OF THE EXALTED CHRIST

Introduction

Among the many difficulties in Ephesians is the question of how to read chapters 1-2. While it appears at first glance that Ephesians 2 contains the letter's theological argument, the precise contours of the author's line of reasoning remain elusive. There is no obvious polemical edge nor is there a clear grammatical transition between the first two chapters to indicate a shift to the letter body. According to Michel Bouttier, 'L'impossibilité de scinder le texte de l'épître se vérifie à nouveau et c'est par commodité que l'on conservera le découpage traditionnel. Depuis la Bénédiction, seule la prise de parole en 3,1 marquera une césure'.¹ If there is anything resembling a consensus regarding this portion of the letter, it is that Ephesians 2 is a continuation of the blessing and thanksgiving section from chapter 1, where the author now turns to ponder the blessings of salvation in lofty prose. For example, Roy Jeal labels this section *narratio*, wherein the author aims to impress 'the fullness and gracious nature of God's salvific actions in Christ, along with some implications of those actions, on the minds of the audience members'.² On such a view, the writer appeals to his listeners' minds and emotions by stressing the desperation of the situation prior to the granting of salvation, thus highlighting God's grace. He reminds the readers of what they 'once' were, and of what God has 'now' done for them—the pattern that is repeated in the two sections, vv. 1-10 and 11-19.³

John Muddiman argues that Ephesians in its present form is the product of the heavy editing of Paul's original Laodicean epistle by one of his disciples. The result is a work whose genre is 'more mixed, indeed confused, than that of the genuine Paulines'. Accordingly, the final form and structure of chapter 2 are nearly impossible to identify, and its rhetoric is neither formal nor sharply defined.⁴ While he maintains that the structure and process of composition of the chapter are unclear, its theological purpose is simply to restate the Pauline

¹ Bouttier 1991, 93.

² Jeal 2000, 131. Cf. also Lincoln, 1983, 626; 1987, 608; Best 1998, 198; Dahl, 2000, 465-66.

³ Tachau 1972, 134-43.

⁴ Muddiman 2001, 98.

doctrine of salvation without the more controversial elements.⁵ Our task in this chapter is to demonstrate that Ephesians 1-2, over against the above readings, does indeed contain a coherent line of argument, and this comes to light when read through the pattern of divine warfare outlined previously in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

The Pattern of Divine Warfare in Ephesians 1:1-2:22

Ephesians 1:1-2:22 represents an appearance of the pattern of divine warfare and includes additional affinities with divine warfare narratives from the ANE and the OT. Far from being a rambling thanksgiving section touching on various aspects of salvation with the goal of elevating the readers' thoughts, there is indeed a coherent and tightly woven argument running through these first two chapters. The letter opens by drawing the readers into the praise of God in Christ for the great blessings in salvation they have received from him. After his prayer that begins in 1:15, the author announces in 1:20-23 that Christ has been exalted to the seat of cosmic lordship at the right hand of God, far above all powers and authorities in the heavenly realm. Such a bold claim cannot pass without defense. The assertion that Christ has been installed as cosmic lord must be vindicated by a display of his credentials as universal sovereign, his triumphs over all competing powers. Such vindication is found in 2:1-16, which elaborates the triumphs of God in Christ over the powers that rule the present evil age. Verses 17-18 depict the victory shout and celebration of the people of God, and vv. 20-22 detail the construction of Christ's temple, which stands as a lasting testament to his triumph. The pattern in this passage, then, is as follows: Lordship (1:20-23), conflict-victory (2:1-16), victory shout (2:17), celebration (2:18), and house-building (2:20-22).

The Liturgical Context of the Pattern of Divine Warfare (1:1-19)

As mentioned above, the author of Ephesians immediately draws his audience into the rhetoric of praise and worship—a strategy that has an important function in relation to divine warfare motifs.⁶ While most NT letters begin with customary greetings, including words of praise and thanksgiving to God in Christ,

⁵ Muddiman 2001, 99.

⁶ Cf. Jeal 2002, 317-18.

along with words of blessing with grace and peace, Ephesians is the only NT letter that opens with an extended *berakah*—a blessing formula that would have been common in Jewish and Jewish-Christian circles.⁷ Many have attempted to determine a structure to this passage but, to this point, no proposal has proved satisfying.⁸ What is more apparent, however, is that, as Best notes, ‘[t]he eulogy hangs together as a whole, beginning and ending with the praise of God’.⁹ Our concern here is not to identify the structure of the *berakah*, but rather to grasp its function as praise in the argument of the letter.

Occurrences of the pattern of divine warfare in texts from the ancient world are most common in contexts of praise to the deity. For example, both instances of the mythic pattern from the ancient Near East discussed previously appear in such contexts. In the Baal cycles, the mythic pattern is followed by a banquet where the gods are gathered to celebrate the kingship of Baal. In *Enuma elish*, the triumph of Marduk is followed by a celebratory feast in which the fifty names of the exalted god are proclaimed. Further, the myths contained in these texts are dramas that would have been re-enacted regularly in the cultus of the respective cultures.¹⁰ Such ritual re-enactments had the function of informing and reflecting the imagination of these nations, wherein the nations’ respective deities held the position of Most High God.

The same is true of many biblical psalms in which Yahweh appears as Divine Warrior.¹¹ Psalm 98, to cite just one example, was most likely composed to be sung by worshipers at the temple to celebrate the triumphant return of Yahweh the Divine Warrior from battle.¹² Because of his conquests, which are

⁷ O’Brien 1979, 504. On the similarity between the sentence structure of the *berekah* and the typical Hebrew sentence structure in Qumran texts, see Kuhn 1968, 117.

⁸ For a survey of ways in which the *berekah* has been variously structured, see Hoehner 2002, 153-61. Cf. also Lincoln 1990, 10-19; O’Brien 1979, 505-16. For discussion of its composition in relation to a creedal or liturgical *Vorlage*, see Best 1997, 55; Dahl 1951, 241-64. In the end, O’Brien claims that it ‘is probably best to refer to the paragraph . . . as an *ad hoc* creation in which the author, by means of exalted liturgical language (some of which was possibly borrowed from early Christian worship), praises God for His glorious plan of salvation, and edifies the readers’ (O’Brien 1979, 509; cf. also Schlier 1971, 41; Sanders 1965, 229; Gniska 1971, 60; Lincoln 1990, 14). M. Kitchen calls the *berekah* a ‘sustained piece of liturgically charged theological writing’ (1994, 45).

⁹ Best 1998, 110.

¹⁰ Kang 1989, 198; Day 1985, 19; Grønbæk 1985, 27-28; Kapelrud 1963, 59.

¹¹ Mowinckel 1962, 106.

¹² Longman 1984, 268-69; Mays 1994a, 312.

listed in vv. 1-3, an ever-expanding community is called upon to worship Yahweh—Israel, then the nations, then all of creation.¹³

The blessing section of Ephesians begins in similar fashion, wherein the writer opens his letter with a call to praise God who has blessed his people with every spiritual blessing in Christ. This ‘outburst of praise’ on the part of the writer (Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεός, ‘Blessed be God’, v. 3) is a form utilized in Israel’s worship to render praise in response to God’s deliverance.¹⁴ By using this form, Perkins claims that

Ephesians telegraphs its intention to the audience. We are about to hear a fine speech in praise of “God [the] Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” True to the conventions of such speech, Ephesians indicates that such praise is the appropriate response to benefits conferred.¹⁵

It is only natural, then, that this extended and lofty section of praise in Ephesians would precede the appearance of the pattern of divine warfare—the assertion of the triumph of God in Christ followed by a rehearsal of his conquests. This doxological direction of Ephesians, focusing on delineating the triumphs of God in Christ, is set from the very beginning by the appearance of the phrase εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης χάριτος αὐτοῦ (‘unto the praise of the glory of his grace’) in v. 6, and the repetition of εἰς ἔπαινον δόξης αὐτοῦ (‘unto the praise of his glory’) in vv. 12 and 14.

The blessing section that opens this letter has the same intended function as other cultic contexts of praise—the formation of the imagination.¹⁶ The notes of predestination and election and the universal scope of the sovereignty of God and his work in Christ are meant to encourage the readers that Christ stands at the very center of God’s sovereignty over the cosmos and that they have been absorbed into the narrative of God’s all-encompassing plan of salvation.¹⁷

A number of scholars have also noted that the *berakah* seems to preview the content of the remainder of the letter.¹⁸ According to Cambier, it is ‘le résumé doctrinal des six chapitres de la lettre’.¹⁹ From the very beginning the cosmic

¹³ Weiser 1962, 637. Other psalms that contain the pattern of divine warfare in the context of praise are Pss 24, 29, 46, 47, 48, 68, 76.

¹⁴ Lincoln 1990, 10.

¹⁵ Perkins 2000, 11:372.

¹⁶ Cf. Walsh and Keesmaat 2004, 84; Jeal 2002, 317-18.

¹⁷ Cf. Yoder Neufeld 2002, 58-59; Mouton 2002, 58-60; Lincoln 1993, 143-44.

¹⁸ O’Brien 1979, 510; Dahl 1951, 262; Sanders 1965, 230; Mouton 2002, 60.

¹⁹ Cambier 1963, 58.

vision of Ephesians is brought into view, with the mention by the writer that God has given every spiritual blessing ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις (v. 3). This serves to shape the readers' identity as belonging to that dimension where Christ has been exalted as Cosmic Lord over the powers and authorities—the dimension also in which they are to wage cosmic warfare against those very same supra-human figures (Eph 6:10-18). Their task in this regard puts them at the very center of God's purposes for the cosmos: ἀνακεφαλαιώσασθαι τὰ πάντα ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ, τὰ ἐπὶ τοῖς οὐρανοῖς καὶ τὰ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἐν αὐτῷ (v. 10).²⁰

The repetition of ἐν Χριστῷ and related phrases (ἐν αὐτῷ, v. 4; ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ, v. 6b) emphasizes both that Christ is the chief agent of God's 'summing up of all things' and the one through whom God blesses his people with salvation. The writer also uses such constructions to indicate that his readers no longer belong to this present evil age, under the authority of the powers and authorities, but that their very identity and location in the cosmos has been transformed—they now are located 'in Christ', pointing ahead to his readers' participation in the triumph of God in Christ.²¹

The prayer that begins in 1:15 makes the writer's intention explicit. He prays that they would be empowered to recognize the apocalyptic vision of reality that he is about to unfold in this letter. In an initial petition, he depicts Paul as praying that God would grant to them a 'spirit of wisdom (σοφίας) and of revelation (ἀποκαλύψεως)' that his readers might have a more fruitful knowledge of God (1:17).²² The writer's language indicates that, though this is not an 'apocalyptic' text,²³ the vision of 'all things' that the writer is about to unfold requires insight granted by God. The intercessory prayer report continues with the petition that his readers' eyes might be 'enlightened' (πεφωτισμένους) so that they might rightly understand their 'calling' (v. 18) and the 'surpassing greatness of his power' (τὸ ὑπερβάλλον μέγεθος τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦς, v. 19) towards them. It is this great power upon which he now elaborates through the assertion of the cosmic lordship of Christ and the listing of the triumphs of God in Christ.

²⁰ Kitchen 1984, 41; Van Kooten 2003, 151; Turner 1995, 139-43.

²¹ Cf. Mouton 2002, 60.

²² Roberts 1991, 49.

²³ See Yoder Neufeld's discussion on the relation of the cosmic vision of Ephesians to apocalyptic literature (2002, 339-41). Cf. also Reynier 1992, 27-28.

Lordship (1:20-23)

The thesis statement of Ephesians is found in 1:20-23, where the author claims that Christ has been exalted to the position of cosmic lordship over the powers ruling the present age and that ‘all things’ have been subjected to him. That this passage stands as the thesis statement is demonstrated by the fact that the phrase that concludes the prayer in v. 19, τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ (‘the power of his strength’), appears again in 6:10, forming an *inclusio* that sets the limits within which the argument of the letter is found.²⁴

This passage is situated at the end of the letter’s first prayer report, where the author prays that his readers’ eyes will be opened so that they will be able to grasp the surpassing greatness of the power of God (v. 19). God exercised (ἐνήργησεν) this power in raising (ἐγείρας) Jesus Christ from the dead and installing him at his right hand as cosmic Lord (vv. 20-23).²⁵

According to v. 20, God has seated Christ ‘at his right hand’ (ἐν δεξιᾷ αὐτοῦ). In the OT, the right hand of Yahweh was a position of favor (Ps 80:18; Jer 22:24), of victory (Ps 20:6; 44:3; Isa 41:10), and of power (Exod 15:6; Ps 89:13; Isa 48:13).²⁶ It is the ‘place of delegated sovereignty’ so that Christ exercises the power of God himself, since he shares in his authority.²⁷

The exaltation formula is based on Psalm 110, the most common OT text in early Christian proclamation.²⁸ While most NT citations of the psalm focus only on v. 1—Hebrews, of course, concentrates on v. 4—the development of vv. 20-23 in chapter 2 reflects the movement of the entire psalm.²⁹ In Psalm 110, Yahweh appoints the Davidic king to his exalted post as lord over his enemies and

²⁴ See the structural analysis of Wendland 1999, 208. While vv. 20-23 are often read as a meditation on the power of God to close off the prayer with a rhetorical flourish, this paragraph is better viewed as the thesis statement of the letter. On the close connection between 1:20-23 and chapter 2, see Roberts 1986, 96-98; 1991, 18-19; 1993, 100-101; Mouton 2002, 61-65. Schnackenburg also notes that the theological argumentation begins at v. 19b (1991, 76). For other suggestions regarding the transition point between greeting and letter body, see Kitchen 1994, 53; Sanders 1962, 348-62; Muddiman 2001, 97-98.

²⁵ A number of scholars prefer to view the two participles along with the two aorist verbs as subordinate to ἐνήργησεν, so that God’s power is exercised in four specific acts: he raises Christ, seats him, subjects all things to him, and makes him head over all things (Best 1998, 170; Harris 1991, 76; Sanders 1965, 220). Hoehner rightly notes, however, that the three aorist verbs in vv. 20-22 are coordinate and the two participles are subordinate to ἐνήργησεν (2002, 273, 282).

²⁶ O’Brien 1999, 141.

²⁷ Caird 1976, 46; O’Brien 1999, 141.

²⁸ On the use of Ps 110 in early Christian proclamation, see Bauckham 1998, 29-42; Moritz 1996, 9-22; Hay 1973; Juel 1988, 135-50; Loader 1978, 199-217.

²⁹ Moritz 1996, 20; cf. also Gese 1997, 190-93.

then subjects the enemies to his king. The task of subjecting the enemies shifts in the latter half of the psalm, as the earthly king goes forth to subdue kings and judge among nations.³⁰ The relationship between the activity of God and his exalted Christ is much the same in Eph 1:20-2:22 as God first subjects enemies to Christ before Christ then becomes active later in Ephesians 2.

This seating of Christ has been done ‘in the heavenlies’ (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις), a phrase that designates the realm of the spiritual world. This realm contains the evil spiritual powers, along with the church, and it is the sphere over which Christ has been exalted as cosmic lord. While Ephesians does not take part in apocalyptic speculations about the number of the heavens, God and Christ most likely dwell in the highest of the heavens while the evil powers inhabit the lower heavens, since Christ has been exalted ‘far above’ all other spiritual powers.³¹

The seating of Christ at the right hand of God in heaven has direct reference to the powers enumerated in v. 21; ‘all rule and authority and power and lordship’ (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος). This listing of various names for the powers is not meant to delineate a hierarchy of spiritual beings or to provoke speculation regarding the inhabitants of the spiritual realm, but simply to underscore that Christ has been exalted as Lord ‘far above’ all conceivable entities of spiritual authority.³² In order to stress this point, the author includes ‘every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the coming one’ (παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου, οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι) (v. 21b).³³

³⁰ There is a shift within vv. 5-7 from second to third person, raising the issue of who is being addressed. Some see Yahweh as addressee here, so that he carries out the destruction of the king’s enemies for him (Allen 1983, 87; Kraus 1989, 2:351-52). It makes better sense, however, for the Davidic king to be in view throughout vv. 5-7. In v. 5a, the prophet addresses himself to the king as he is about to undertake the conquest spoken of in vv. 1-2, and assures him of the assistance of Yahweh (יְהוָה אִתְּךָ יְרֵךְ, ‘the Lord is at your right hand’). Then, in vv. 5b-7, the prophet turns to a vision of the future as the king carries out the battle. He is still referring to the Davidic king, but now in the third person (Gilbert and Pisano 1980, 349).

³¹ Bauckham 1998, 27; cf. also Noll 1998, 139.

³² According to Schwindt, ‘Daß dieser räumlich oberhalb jeglicher Macht gedacht wird, ist Ausdruck von Gottes und Christi herrscherlicher Stellung über dem All und allen darin wesenden Potenzen’ (2002, 355).

³³ Contra Wesley Carr, who claims that the author is merely contrasting the exalted power of Christ with all other authority (1981, 99). He states that the ‘usage of Ps 110:1 in the NT always stresses the glorified presence of Christ with God and does not refer to some act of Christ in defeating his enemies’ (1981, 98). While Carr’s contention does have some limited validity—in that the usage of Ps 110 in the NT *largely* has to do only with the exaltation of Jesus Christ—this

The major role that the powers and authorities play in Ephesians raises the question of their identity. Wesley Carr argues that the powers and authorities in Ephesians do not refer to evil demonic powers that rule the present age, but to the pure angelic host surrounding the throne of God. To support this position, Carr maintains that in the thought-world of the first century CE, evil was concentrated exclusively in the figure of Satan. He also argues that Psalm 110 is used throughout the NT to speak about the exaltation of Christ in the presence of God, with no reference to Christ defeating his enemies.³⁴ Against Carr's reading, there is substantial evidence that belief in the demonic realm was quite extensive in the first century CE. And, while Carr correctly notes that Psalm 110 appears several times in the NT to speak solely of Christ's glorification to the right hand of God, there is a link in 1:20 between the hostile powers and the enemies in the quotation from Psalm 110.³⁵

The writer has in view here the entire range of supra-human powers that were given authority over creation but are now arrayed in hostility against the church and the purposes of God in the world.³⁶ These figures reside 'in the heavenlies' but are closely intertwined with the earthly institutions which they manipulate in leading humanity astray.³⁷ Such supra-human powers have antecedents in both Graeco-Roman thought and in Jewish theology, and so would have resonated in the imagination of the author's audience, however diverse.

citation of Ps 110 is unique precisely because it involves the subjection of the powers to the sovereign authority of Christ. In Ps 110, the exalted one is sitting in authority over his enemies, a suggestion made clearer in the remainder of Eph 1:20-23. First, the appearance in v. 21a of ὑπεράνω does not merely indicate that the power of Christ is greater relative to that of the powers and authorities, but indicates specifically that he is in authority over them. Second, the subjection of 'all things' (πάντα) under the feet of Christ is related directly to the powers (v. 22a). While all conceivable entities certainly are in view here, the reference to the powers just mentioned is unmistakable (Caird 1976, 46; O'Brien 1999, 145; Wendland 1999, 211-12; Best 1998, 180; Hoehner 2002, 282-83; Caragounis 1977, 144).

³⁴ Carr 1981, 98-99, 122-23.

³⁵ This link is made more explicitly in the quotation of Ps 110 in 1 Cor 15:25-26. For further critique of Carr's proposal, see Arnold 1989, 47-51; Lincoln 1990, 63-64; Wink 1984, 23-26; O'Brien 1984, 125-28.

³⁶ Schwindt 2002, 392; Yoder Neufeld 1997, 122.

³⁷ Walter Wink identifies the powers and authorities with the 'spirit' or the social force at work in powerful and oppressive societal structures, and with those very structures themselves (Wink 1984, 60-64). Wink is perhaps correct that first century hearers of Ephesians would not have distinguished between the identity of the powers and their earthly manifestations (60). There does appear to be some distinction in Ephesians, however, between the powers as supra-human personal beings and their effects in human affairs. They are said to dwell 'in the heavenlies' (Eph 1:20-21; 3:10; 6:12) and their influence is felt in the ordering of a worldly mindset that is hostile to God (2:2) (cf. Schwindt 2002, 392-93). In the end, however, the line between the powers and their earthly manifestations is, admittedly, a fuzzy one.

According to the Jewish belief in angelic powers, God had delegated authority over the nations to angelic beings, who have rebelled against God and now lead humanity astray into idolatry, among a variety of other sins (Deut 32:17; *1 Enoch* 19:1; 64:1, 2; *Jub.* 15:31-32; *T. Dan.* 5:5, 6).³⁸ This understanding was further developed in Daniel, where monstrous beasts represent empires (Dan 7:2-8). In Dan 10:13-21, the ‘one like a man’, along with Michael, fights with the ‘Princes’ of Greece and Persia.³⁹

These angels of the nations play a prominent role in the early Jewish literature as well. This view of the powers came to full expression in *1 Enoch*, which narrates how rebellious angels left their place in heaven and came to earth to take women as their wives, to introduce to humanity heavenly secrets, and lead them into rebellion and sin against God. These angels will be judged because they ‘have taught injustice and because [they] have shown to the people deeds of shame, injustice, and sin’ (13:2; cf. 56:4; 64:1, 2; *Jub.* 4:22).

Early Jewish texts depict one central figure as the authority over all other evil angelic powers. Known by a variety of names, he is most commonly called ‘Satan’ or ‘Beliar’. In *Jub.* 7:26-27, Noah observes that his sons have begun to ‘walk in paths of corruption’. He notes the jealousy between brothers and claims that ‘the demons have begun to mislead you and your children’ (cf. 10:1-14). In *Jub.* 11:4-6, evil spirits assist people in making idols and ‘led them astray so that they might commit sin and pollution’. Behind it all is Satan: ‘And the prince, Mastema, acted forcefully to do all of this. And he sent other spirits to those who were set under his hand to practice all error and sin and all transgression’ (cf. also 10:8). Throughout *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* evil spirits such as the ‘spirits of deceit’ (*T. Reub.* 2:1-9) lead people astray into various sins. These spirits are also under the authority of Beliar. According to *T. Dan.* 1:7-8, ‘one of the spirits of Beliar was at work within me, saying, “Take this sword, and with it kill Joseph; once he is dead, your father will love you”. This is the spirit of anger...’

In Ephesians, these figures are portrayed as leading humanity astray from the path of obedience to God. They rule the present evil age, ordering it in such a

³⁸ Lincoln 1990, 63-64; Reid 1993, 750-51; Leivestad 1954, 160-61; Yates 1980, 101; O’Brien 1984, 137; Caragounis 1977, 157-61.

³⁹ Reid 1993, 750-51.

way that humanity is enticed to continue in transgressions and sins, remaining spiritually dead.⁴⁰

According to the author, God has not only subjected ‘all things’ to Christ, but ‘gave him as head over all things to the church’ (αὐτὸν ἔδωκεν κεφαλὴν ὑπὲρ πάντα τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ), reflecting the intimate relationship between the cosmic Lord Christ and his people in Ephesians, a prominent theme of strategic importance throughout the letter.⁴¹ In v. 23, the author states that the church is the body of Christ (ἥτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, ‘which is his body’), indicating that the church is the earthly manifestation of the living and exalted Christ, and Christ is its animating life-force—the dynamic presence that gives life and sustenance to the whole body.⁴² The writer adds to this ‘body’ imagery the notion that the church is the ‘fullness’ of Christ: ‘the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way’ (τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου) (v. 23b).⁴³ The special relationship of unity between Christ and the church has direct reference to his status as cosmic lord over the powers ruling the present age. Christ has been given as head over all things to the church (v. 22b), and the church

⁴⁰ This understanding of the *role* of the powers stands in contrast to the reconstruction of Arnold, who argues that the readers of Ephesians were being tempted to live in fear of the powers which had dominated their lives prior to their conversion (1989, 41). There are few indications within Ephesians that the letter was written to address this concern. E.g., the ethical section lacks any exhortations against fearing the powers. On the present view, the powers are those which rule the present evil age, ordering it in such a way that people would be led astray into sin and rebellion against God, so that the conflict with the powers involves living according to the New Humanity instead of the old humanity (cf. Leivestad 1954, 162; Yoder Neufeld 1997, 104, 108; Yates 1980, 111).

⁴¹ Hoehner 2002, 289. Contra Jeal 2000, 105-6; Dawes 1998, 140; Lincoln 1990, 67; Lindemann 1975, 212; Caird 1976, 48. The term κεφαλὴ clearly has the sense of ‘authority’ here rather than ‘source’, as the allusion to Ps 8:7 demonstrates, so that the lordship of Christ over ‘all things’ is in view, not that he is the source of life for the church. The ‘head’ metaphor is separate from the ‘body’ metaphor in this passage, however the mention of the one may have brought to mind the other. As Howard notes, ‘Christ is head not because the church is his body, but because all things have been subjected under his feet’ (1974, 353; cf. also Lincoln 1990, 69-70; Dawes 1998, 140-41; O’Brien 1999, 145-46; Best 1998, 182; contra Muddiman 2001, 92).

⁴² Barth 1974, 199; Usami 1983, 126. For background on the ‘head-body’ imagery in Eph, see Arnold 1994; Barth 1974, 183-210.

⁴³ Some scholars regard this clause in apposition to αὐτὸν from the middle of v. 22 (Caird 1976, 49; Moule 1951, 79-86; Muddiman 2001, 95). They argue that this makes good sense in light of the close relationship between Eph and Col, especially Col 1:19 and 2:9, where πλήρωμα refers to Christ. On this view, the words τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἥτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ are read as a parenthesis (Muddiman 2001, 95). It is better grammatically, however, to read the clause in apposition to σῶμα, which is closer to τὸ πλήρωμα than αὐτόν, which is quite remote, and which is already in apposition to κεφαλὴν (Best 1998, 184; Jeal 2000, 109; O’Brien 1999, 150; Perkins 2000, 11:384; Schnackenburg 1991, 80-81; Yates 1972, 151; MacDonald 2000, 221; Lincoln 1990, 73). The emphasis at the end of this section is on the place of the church in relation to the exalted Christ so that it makes good sense for the two clauses in v. 23 to expand on this relationship (Lincoln 1990, 73; Gnllka 1971, 97).

is the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way (v. 23b).⁴⁴ This unity between Christ in his role as cosmic lord and the church anticipates the discussion of the nature of spiritual warfare in Ephesians, where the church carries out its role in participating in the triumph of God in Christ over the powers and authorities.

Conflict-Victory (2:1-16)

The claim that Jesus Christ has been exalted as cosmic Lord and that the evil powers that presently rule the fallen creation have been subjected to him must be substantiated. That is, the author must answer the question, If Christ has been so exalted, what are his triumphs, or in what way has he demonstrated his

⁴⁴ The grammatical problems involved in v. 23b are notorious and well-rehearsed (See the discussions in Arnold 1989, 82-85; Lincoln 1990, 72-78; Best 1998, 183-89; Benoit 1984, 136-58; Usami 1983, 129-36; Gnlika 1971, 97-111; Barth 1974, 158-59, 200-210; Dawes 1998, 237-48). Two broad interpretations may be outlined. First, a number of scholars argue that the clause indicates that the church fills Christ who is filled completely by God (Overfield 1979, 393; Benoit 1984, 156; Yates 1972, 149-51). On this view τὸ πλήρωμα is regarded in an active sense ('that which fills'), a meaning which is widely attested in the NT (Mark 8:20; Matt 9:16; 1 Cor 10:26; Rom 11:25). This notion, which at first might sound theologically strange—the idea of Christ being completed in some way by the church—makes good sense in light of Col 1:24 where Paul regards the suffering he encounters in his ministry as completing what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. The participle πληρουμένου is read in a passive sense so that Christ is regarded as the one who is being filled (Best 1998, 184-85; Yates 1972, 149-51; de la Potterie 1977, 503-7; Hoehner 2002, 299). Finally, τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν is read adverbially, so that God fills Christ 'completely' (Yates 1972, 151; Barth 1974, 156; Moule 1959, 160). An alternative reading regards the church as the fullness of Christ who fills all things (Lincoln 1990, 77; Jeal 2000, 108-109; Schnackenburg 1991, 81; Turner 1994, 1228; O'Brien 1999, 151; Hanson 1946, 127-29; Gnlika 1971, 97-99; Schlier 1971, 98-99; MacDonald 2000, 221). On this view πλήρωμα is taken in a passive sense, which makes good sense within Ephesians as a whole—in Eph 3:19 the author depicts Paul as praying that his readers would 'be filled' (πληρωθῆτε) to all 'the fullness' (πλήρωμα) of God—and of which there are a number of examples in contemporary Greek (Lincoln 1990, 74-75). The participle πληρουμένου is regarded as being middle in form with an active force so that Christ is the one who does the filling. This active sense is reflected in Eph 4:10 where Christ is viewed as filling all things (πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα). Finally, the phrase τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν is understood adjectivally, indicating that Christ fills 'all things in every way', which is also parallel to the appearance in 4:10 of τὰ πάντα. On grammatical grounds a decision between these two interpretations is difficult. The latter, however, is preferable, since it makes better sense within Ephesians as a whole. While Colossians notes that the fullness of God resides in Christ, the emphasis in Ephesians is on the relationship between Christ—and God in Christ by the Spirit—and the church, a notion with which the latter reading fits well (cf. 3:19; 4:13; 5:18). This view also fits nicely with the notion of the church as the 'body of Christ', so that Christ is depicted as filling the church with his life and his power. According to Arnold, v. 23b is best understood in light of the 'fullness' language in the OT, which is often used to indicate the presence of God (Arnold 1989, 83-85). Ezek 44:4 states that 'the house of the Lord is *full* (πλήρης) of his glory'. In Jeremiah 23:24, the Lord asks, 'Do I not *fill* (πληρῶ) the heavens and the earth?' Just as the OT occasionally referred to the presence of God via 'fullness' language, so too in Eph 1:23 the church is the dwelling place of Jesus Christ, the place where his 'fullness' resides. In the OT God's presence filled the earthly temple, while at the same time it filled the entire universe, in that there was nothing outside the scope of the sovereign rule of Israel's God. Likewise, v. 23 notes that Christ 'fills all things' in that his reign as Lord of all things includes everything in every place, while the church is the fullness of Christ in that his relationship with the church is unique (Gombis 2002, 260-62).

superiority over these supposedly vanquished powers?⁴⁵ Two parallel passages (vv. 1-10, 11-16) vindicate this claim.

The first section (vv. 1-10) details the triumph of God in Christ over the powers who rule the present evil age, operating under the ultimate direction of the ‘prince of the authority of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience’. The section is a distinct unit in that an *inclusio* marks off its limits—the verb ‘to walk’ appearing in v. 2 and again in v. 10, emphasizing the transformative power of God: Whereas once people led an existence of death, walking in transgressions and sins, they now lead an existence in good works.⁴⁶

Threat (2:1-3)

The author dwells on the readers’ former existence with the aim of highlighting the dark and desperate situation they faced prior to their conversion. He then details the manner in which God has saved them. The portrayal of a dire situation that demands rescue and salvation is a typical device in divine warrior scenarios. The desperate situation is emphasized and drawn out in bold strokes so that the salvation will appear all the more dramatic.

For example, the dark threat that faces the younger gods in *Enuma elish* is portrayed quite effectively. Tiamat is disturbed and rouses herself in determination to destroy the younger gods.⁴⁷ The threatening mood begins to darken as the narrative details her arrangements for battle, including the terrifying monsters she creates as weapons of war.⁴⁸ The threat increases as the focus shifts to the deliberations of the younger gods and the fear that the news of Tiamat’s war preparations strikes in their hearts.⁴⁹ Ea, the leader of the younger gods, goes to Anshar, his father, and tells him of the threat, leaving Anshar deeply troubled.⁵⁰ Anu, an emissary, is sent to Tiamat to attempt to mollify her, but he is so shaken

⁴⁵ This need to vindicate a claim to supremacy is reflected in the familiar $\text{׀} \text{׀}$ constructions in OT poetry, which elaborate on claims of Yahweh’s superiority. E.g., Ps 24:1, 2: ‘The earth is Yahweh’s... *for* ($\text{׀} \text{׀}$) he founded it...’ (cf. also Exod 15:1, 19, 21; Ps 47:8; 48:5; 98:1, 9). Schwindt recognizes that Ephesians 2 directly relates to the exaltation of Christ as lord over his enemies: ‘Das zweite Briefkapitel beginnt mit einer adressatenbezogenen Aktualisierung der zuvor beschriebenen Christusherrschaft, beginnend mit einem Rückblick auf die frühere sündige Existenz der Heidenchristen unter der Hegemonie des Teufels’ (2002, 379).

⁴⁶ Both sections of chapter 2 (vv. 1-10, 11-19) are structured according to a ‘once-now’ schema (Tachau 1972, 134-43), which Gese calls a ‘soteriologische Kontrastschema’ (1997, 146).

⁴⁷ I, 120-130 (citations from Ginsberg 1969, 129-42).

⁴⁸ I, 130-160.

⁴⁹ II, 1-90.

⁵⁰ II, 1-50, esp. 49-50.

at merely approaching Tiamat that he flees back to Anshar, elevating the sense of terror, thus driving the level of the threat to breaking point.⁵¹ The gods assemble and their collective thought is that ‘no god can go [to battle and] facing Tiamat, escape [with his life]’.⁵²

The narrative of the battle between David and Goliath in 1 Sam 17 opens similarly, with the desperate situation faced by Israel.⁵³ They are at a standoff with the Philistines, who have put forward their ‘champion’, proposing to decide the war by representative combat. The narrative goes to great lengths in describing Goliath, ponderously noting his enormous size, his experience in combat, and his impressive equipment (vv. 4-8), building the sense of dread. He embodies the strength and power of the Philistine army, and the overwhelming obstacle that they pose to the army of Israel.⁵⁴ Not only does Israel face this huge threat posed by Goliath, but the stakes for the army are high. For forty days Goliath has been taunting them, attempting to shame them into taking up his challenge (v. 16).⁵⁵ If any ‘man’ can defeat Goliath, then the Philistines will become the servants of Israel.⁵⁶ But if Goliath triumphs, then Israel will become the servants of the Philistines, to ‘serve’ them (v. 9). Though it appears that Saul would have been the obvious one to answer the challenge, he and his army have responded only with fear. The scene closes with a note of intense desperation and utter hopelessness—the men are ‘dismayed’ (יִיחָזְקוּ) and ‘greatly afraid’ (מְאֹד מְרִיָּאָה) (v. 11).

In the same way, the author portrays the threatening situation in dark and desperate tones (2:1-3). His description is so ponderous and unwieldy that it forms an anacoluthon—the main verb of this long clause finally appearing in the

⁵¹ II, 60-80.

⁵² II, 89-90.

⁵³ That this is indeed a Divine Warrior context is demonstrated by the speech of David, which casts the conflict into explicitly theological terms, making it out to be a battle between Yahweh and the gods of the Philistines. After Goliath curses David by his gods (v. 43), David states that though Goliath is heavily armed with sword, spear, and javelin, David is armed with the name of ‘Yahweh of hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת)’, the God of the armies of Israel—the Divine Warrior, who has been challenged by Goliath (v. 45).

⁵⁴ George 1999, 396; Brueggemann 1990, 127.

⁵⁵ Gordon 1986, 155; McCarter 1980, 293.

⁵⁶ The appearance of ‘man’ (אָדָם) throughout the narrative is used to great effect to portray the unsuitability of David to face Goliath. It appears 17 times in the narrative, but never with reference to David, who is a ‘son of Jesse’ (v. 12), a keeper of only a ‘few sheep’ (v. 28), an errand boy, sent to bring supplies to his brothers at the battlefield, among the ‘men of Israel’ (v. 19) (Klein 1983, 177).

middle of v. 5. This desperate situation was one in which the readers were held captive in death through their engagement in transgressions and sins, conducting their lives (περιεπατήσατε) under the power of two dominating influences.

These controlling influences are both indicated by κατὰ, which indicates compulsion or control.⁵⁷ First, they walked κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου ('according to the age of this world'). It is tempting to view this phrase as a reference to a personal deity, along with a number of commentators, since this would depict the conflict between Christ and the powers more directly and explicitly.⁵⁸ Indeed there appears good reason to adopt such a reading. The two parallel κατὰ phrases would then both denote a personal being.⁵⁹

But this interpretation is unlikely. The phrase is, rather, a loose rendering of a Hebraism, indicating 'this present world order' and all its values which are formed either in opposition to, or apart from consideration of God and his ways.⁶⁰ The readers' behavior and attitudes had been shaped by and oriented according to the powerful influences of 'a spatio-temporal complex wholly hostile to God'.⁶¹

Second, they were under the control of the 'ruler of the authority of the air' (κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος), a reference to the devil or Satan, the ruler of the forces leading humanity in disobedience to God.⁶² In early Jewish and early Christian texts, this figure is known by a number of different names and has a variety of activities ascribed to him. In *Jub.* 10:8, he is known as 'Mastema', 'the chief of the spirits', and 'Beliar' who ensnares and corrupts Israel

⁵⁷ O'Brien 1999, 158; Best 1998, 202.

⁵⁸ Bruce 1984, 281-82; Gnllka 1971, 114; Schlier 1971, 101; Lindemann 1975, 56-59; Schnackenburg 1991, 91. Cf. also Yoder Neufeld 2002, 92-93.

⁵⁹ Best argues that the figure known as the devil had many names in contemporary Judaism and early Christianity so that the adoption of the name of a pagan god or evil power would not be wholly unexpected, especially since 'this age' already had an evil connotation (1998, 204). Ignatius seems to have taken it this way in his *Epistle to the Ephesians* (19.1, 2) (cited in Best 1998, 204). Also, it is argued that elsewhere in Paul he can speak of a 'god of this age' (2 Cor 4:4) and that such a figure here would be equivalent to the ruler of the realm of the air, the devil (6:11) or the evil one (6:16) (Schlier 1971, 102).

⁶⁰ In every other instance in the Pauline corpus, the term is used in a temporal sense, a meaning that fits well here (O'Brien 1999, 159). Further, one finds several discussions in the letters attributed to Paul of evil powers ruling the present evil age, but in none of these contexts is αἰών used to refer to such powers (MacDonald 2000, 229). While it is difficult to know if the intended audience contained a majority of Jewish Christians, the imagery that dominates Ephesians is that of Jewish apocalypticism, making it more natural to understand this phrase as a reference to the present age (Muddiman 2001, 103; Perkins 2000, 11: 390; Caird 1976, 51; Lincoln 1990, 94; Mußner 1982, 59).

⁶¹ Lincoln 1990, 94.

⁶² Lincoln 1990, 95; Caird 1976, 51; Kreitzer 1997, 72; Best 1998, 204; Aune 1995, 155-

and accuses them before God (1:20). He is the ‘Prince of Error’ who blinded Simeon’s mind so as to sell Joseph into slavery (*T. Sim.* 2:7), and who caused Judah to go astray through the love of money (*T. Jud.* 19:4).⁶³ In the Synoptics, Satan is referred to as ‘the ruler of demons’ (Matt 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15), in John ‘the ruler of this world’ (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11) and in 2 Cor 4:4, he is known as ‘the god of this age’.

In Eph 2:2, the ἄρχοντα is not specifically identified as Satan, but he is described as the ‘personale gottwidrige Macht’ in authority over the powers and principalities.⁶⁴ In 4:27 and 6:11 he is mentioned explicitly as the devil (διαβόλου), and in 6:16 as the evil one.⁶⁵ So it is most likely Satan who is in view in 2:2—the one who rules over the forces of darkness inhabiting the spiritual realm (ἄέρος). These forces carry out his directives and purposes in tempting humanity to walk in transgressions and sins and thus to remain in spiritual death.⁶⁶

Satan is also depicted as operating actively in unbelievers in some way. According to v. 2, there is a ‘spirit now working in/among the sons of disobedience’ (τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργοῦντος ἐν τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἁπειθείας) influencing them to continue in lifestyles of transgressions and sins so that they will remain spiritually dead. Scholars disagree as to the referent of τοῦ πνεύματος, some arguing that it is in apposition to ἄέρος, some to ἄρχοντα, and others that it is subordinate to ἄρχοντα, parallel to ἐξουσίας.⁶⁷ It makes best

⁶³ Riley 1995, 467-68.

⁶⁴ Schwindt 2002, 383.

⁶⁵ Lincoln 1990, 95.

⁶⁶ The datives (τοῖς παραπτώμασιν . . . ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις) are here read as both causing and characterizing the state of spiritual death (Gnilka 1971, 114; O’Brien 1999, 157).

⁶⁷ The majority of commentators read τοῦ πνεύματος in apposition to ἄρχοντα (Jeal 2000, 134; Gnilka 1971, 115; Turner 1994, 1229; Lindemann 1975, 110; Fee 1994, 679; Arnold 1989, 61-62; O’Brien 1999, 160; Bratcher and Nida 1982, 41; Best 1998, 205). This reading of the two phrases (τὸν ἄρχοντα . . . τοῦ πνεύματος . . .) views the two nouns as parallel descriptions of the person of Satan. This view also maintains that it is a personal spirit that is active among unbelievers. Turner points to *Asc. Is.* 2:2-4, where Satan is said to have ‘rejoiced in Jerusalem because of Manasseh and strengthened him in his leading to apostasy and in the lawlessness which was spread abroad in Jerusalem’ (1994, 1229). While this view is held by a majority of commentators, it is grammatically awkward at best, and impossible at worst. Lincoln notes that it is awkward to regard τοῦ πνεύματος as a genitive of apposition since τὸν ἄρχοντα is accusative (1990, 96). Wallace goes further, arguing that such a relationship is grammatically impossible, since such cannot occur when both nouns are personal (1996, 104). This is so because, according to Wallace’s definition, ‘the genitive of apposition typically states a specific example that is a part of the larger category named by the head noun’ (95). The relationship between τοῦ πνεύματος and τὸν ἄρχοντα—in order to accommodate this view—would have to fall under a grammatical category such as ‘simple apposition’, which is also impossible, since τὸν ἄρχοντα is not a genitive.

grammatical sense, and fits well with the context, to read τοῦ πνεύματος as a genitive of subordination in relation to ἐξουσίας, resulting in the translation, ‘the ruler... of the spirit now working...’.⁶⁸ On this view, then, Satan is depicted as ruling over an evil spirit that works in/among the disobedient, leading them astray to continue in transgressions and sins, remaining spiritually dead.⁶⁹

The author continues in v. 3 to portray the dark and desperate former situation of his readers by noting that not only were their lives determined by the evil rulers of the present age, but also by their own human sinfulness.⁷⁰ He identifies himself with his readers at this point, noting that ‘we also all formerly conducted ourselves’ (καὶ ἡμεῖς πάντες ἀνεστράχημέν ποτε) among the children of disobedience.⁷¹ He describes their existence as living ‘in the lusts of our flesh’ (ἐν ταῖς ἐπιθυμίαις τῆς σαρκὸς ἡμῶν), which is then expanded by

⁶⁸ Lincoln 1990, 95-96; Robinson 1904, 154; Abbott 1897, 42; Wallace 1996, 104; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 93; Hoehner 2002, 315. On this category of genitives, see Wallace 1996, 103-4.

⁶⁹ Lincoln 1990, 96-97. According to Lincoln, it is difficult to determine whether τοῦ πνεύματος refers to a personal or impersonal spirit in light of the fact that even references to the Spirit of God as πνεῦμα often hover between personal and impersonal connotations. Further, it may be that when the author chooses to speak of evil spirit beings, as he does in 6:12, he uses the adjective πνευματικά, and not πνεύματα (1990, 96). This ambivalence between personal and impersonal is reflected in a number of the Jewish texts that depict the activity of spirits operating under the authority of Satan (e.g., *Jub.* 10:1-14; 11:4-6; 12:19-20; *T. Sim.* 3:1; 4:1-9; *T. Jud.* 20:1). To support the notion of an impersonal spirit, Lincoln cites 1 Cor 2:12, where Paul supposedly recognizes that there is a spirit working in the world in opposition to the Spirit of God (1990, 97). An appeal to 1 Cor 2:12 to support such a notion is questionable, however, since it does not appear that τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ κόσμου is a reference to a spirit that belongs to the world. The author ‘is not suggesting that there is a “spirit” of the world comparable to the Holy Spirit’, but rather that the Spirit whom the Corinthians have received is not ‘from this world’, but from God (Fee 1994, 102-3; cf. Witherington 1995, 128; Adams 2000, 116; Barrett 1971, 75).

⁷⁰ Lindemann argues that in vv. 2, 3 the writer describes the same situation from two different perspectives. In v. 2, he speaks in mythological terms, and non-mythological terms in v. 3 (1975, 113). It is more natural, however, to read the two descriptions as focusing on the sources of sinfulness in the world—the evil powers ruling this age, and human sinfulness. Such a supposed tension is discernible in certain Jewish texts where passages point to evil spirits as the cause of evil and temptation in close proximity to those which point to the evil in one’s own heart (e.g., *Jub.* 12:19-20 and 21).

⁷¹ Some commentators read the ‘we/you’ contrast which runs throughout the letter as a contrast between the author as a Christian Jew and his readers as Gentiles (Abbott 1897, 43; Schlier 1971, 105-6; Barth 1974, 211-12; Bruce 1984, 280; O’Brien 1999, 156; Fee 1994, 669). It is more likely, however, that the contrast is between the writer and his ministry associates (‘we’), and his readers (‘you’) (Perkins 2000, 11:389; Schnackenburg 1991, 90; Lincoln 1990, 88; Gniska 1971, 112; Lindemann 1975, 108; Best 1981, 15; 1998, 208; Jeal 2000, 133; Hoehner 2002, 317; cf. also Kreitzer 1997, 72). The addition of πάντες in v. 3 makes it clear that the reference is to all people being in an unregenerate state, not just to Jews. Further, the usage of the first person plural throughout the remainder of the section, not to mention 1:3-14, does not restrict the recipients of the blessings of salvation to Jewish Christians (Hoehner 2002, 317). Lastly, it must be stressed that the Jew/Gentile contrast plays only a minor role in Ephesians, showing up in 2:11-16 to make a very strategic and limited point. The author is not addressing a pressing situation of tension between Jewish and Gentile Christians, but is rather noting that Christ has triumphed over the division created by the Mosaic Law by uniting Jew and Gentile in one New Humanity, on which see below.

the further phrase ‘doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind’ (ποιοῦντες τὰ θελήματα τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ τῶν διανοιῶν).

This is a comprehensive diagnosis of their previous state—not only their actions, but their plans, thoughts, aims, motives, dispositions, and imaginations were affected by sin and were in opposition to God. Because of this, they were destined for eschatological destruction. They are called ‘children of wrath’ (τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς) in v. 3b, bringing to a climax the desperate situation in which they were found prior to their conversion. They had no hope of escape, but were completely in need of a salvation God alone could provide.

Triumph over the Powers (2:4-6)

With v. 4 there is a transition in the passage (δε) where the author now describes the dramatic rescue—God’s mighty work of salvation—whereby God triumphed over the powers of evil (vv. 4-6). In comparison with the surrounding context, the description of God’s act of salvation is quite brief, taking up only two and a half verses—with v. 5a recapitulating the previous situation—to speak of God’s motivation and actual act(s) of rescue and deliverance. Such a brief report of the conflict and victory of God over his enemies is not unusual in Divine Warrior contexts, where much more space typically is devoted to the development of the threatening situation, setting the backdrop against which the great power of God in salvation can be emphasized. Further, in contexts that develop the scenario at length, a brief statement of the conflict and victory serves to emphasize the stunning and dramatic deliverance.

For example, in the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal in 1 Kings 18, the actual climax of the story is very brief in relation to the rest of the narrative, being reported in just two verses (vv. 38-39).⁷² Much space is devoted to the speeches of Elijah to the people gathered around to witness the ‘battle of the gods’.⁷³ Further, the description of the frantic activity of the prophets of Baal attempting to get the attention of their god is quite extensive.

⁷² That this is a passage in which the Divine Warrior appears is clear from the presence of several theophanic elements commonly found in such contexts, such as ‘fire’ (עשׂה) and ‘voice’ (קוֹל) (Domeris 1997, 3:900; Naudé 1997, 1:534; Hamp 1974, 1:426; Klingbeil 1999, 84-99).

⁷³ Elijah challenges the people to move beyond their indecision between following Yahweh or Baal, and then sets up a contest between the two to demonstrate who is supreme. Both Elijah and the prophets of Baal will prepare a sacrifice so that the deity who brings down fire upon the sacrifice will be declared the God of Israel (vv. 22-24).

The narrative notes that they spent almost the entire day attempting to rouse Baal to action.⁷⁴ The emphatic conclusion, repeated in vv. 26 and 29, stresses the futility of the prophets: ‘but there was no voice, and no one answered and no one paid attention’ (וַאֲשֶׁר-קָוָה וַאֲשֶׁר-עָנָה וַאֲשֶׁר-קָשָׁב).⁷⁵

The narrative also elaborately and methodically draws out the preparations by Elijah of the altar that he constructs, and then focuses at length on his prayer (vv. 30-37). Finally, in stark contrast to the elaborate descriptions of the action to this point, as soon as Elijah finishes his prayer in v. 37 Yahweh immediately and dramatically answers (v. 38). The contrast between the lack of any response on the part of Baal to his prophets’ repeated and extended pleadings and Yahweh’s immediate response to Elijah’s request could not be clearer.⁷⁶

The same is true of the David vs. Goliath narrative in 1 Sam 17. While the narrative dwells at length on the physical and militaristic advantage of Goliath (vv. 4-7), patiently developing the character of David and the dreadful nature of the threat Israel was facing, the actual description of the conflict is quite brief, comprising only two verses (vv. 48-49). As Goliath lumbers forward, David unleashes one of his stones, hitting Goliath in the head. Goliath ‘falls down with his face to the ground’, recalling Dagon’s prostration before the ark of the covenant in 1 Samuel 5.⁷⁷ David then rushes over to cut off Goliath’s head and the army of Israel chases after the Philistines as they flee (v. 51).

In the same way, the author’s description of the actual salvation and rescue of believers who had previously been caught in such a dreadful situation is stunningly brief—just three verbs (vv. 5-6). This is all the more impressive in a letter known for its ‘superabundance of words’ with endless genitival

⁷⁴ They ‘called’ (קָוָה) out to Baal to ‘answer’ throughout the entire day, from morning until noon, continuing until the time for the evening sacrifice (vv. 26, 29) (DeVries 1985, 229). In v. 28, their efforts become more desperate as they continue to ‘cry’ (קָשָׁב) and now begin to gash themselves, perhaps as a substitute for human sacrifice (Gray 1977, 399).

⁷⁵ In both vv. 26 and 29 the negative particle is repeated to emphasize the conclusion, making it more dramatic. The mention in the narrative that ‘there was no voice (קָוָה)’ also stands out in light of the frequent use of קָוָה ‘to call’ in vv. 24-26 (Hauser 1990, 42).

⁷⁶ The difference in the two approaches is also emphasized by the similarity between two Hebrew phrases: the prophets of Baal cut themselves ‘according to their custom’ (כַּמִּשְׁפָּטָם, v. 28), while Elijah constructs the altar ‘according to the number’ (כַּמִּסְפָּר, v. 31) of the tribes of Israel (Gregory 1990, 122).

⁷⁷ Whereas Goliath had threatened that Israel would ‘serve’ the Philistines and their gods (v. 9), Goliath is forced into the position of worship before Yahweh (George 1999, 407).

constructions and elaborate descriptions.⁷⁸ The main verb—*συνεζωοποίησεν*—governs the entire paragraph from vv. 1-5, and the second (*συνήγειρεν*) and third (*συνεκάθισεν*) verbs further explain God's saving action.⁷⁹ These verbs are quite obviously related to God's raising and seating of Christ in 1:20, a relationship which is made explicit by the *συν*- prefix on the three verbs.⁸⁰ When God acted to raise Christ and seat him in the heavenlies, believers were included along with him.⁸¹

In v. 5b, the author interjects that it is truly by grace that his readers have been saved (*χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι*).⁸² He is careful throughout this chapter

⁷⁸ Best 1993a, 19. According to Gnllka, 'Was den Stil prägt, ist seine geradezu unersättliche Neigung zur Abundanz' (1971, 31).

⁷⁹ Schnackenburg 1991, 95.

⁸⁰ Gese 1997, 226-28; Caragounis 1977, 69; Mouton 2002, 64. Contra Schlier, who maintains that the inclusive element has the union of Gentile and Jewish Christians in view (1971, 109).

⁸¹ Allen 1986, 106; Weber 1995, 478. The 'in Christ' formula emphasizes the inclusion of believers with Christ, which is highlighted further by the compound verbs. In v. 5 τῷ Χριστῷ appears, along with ἐν Χριστῷ *Ἰησοῦ in v. 6b, in a locative sense. According to Best, Christ is the 'place' where God acts for us (1998, 223). One crucial difference between the situation of the exalted Christ and that of believers is that whereas Christ has been seated at the right hand of the throne of God—indicating his position of authority and power—believers are not spoken of as having received such an endowment. Several writers argue that since believers are included in what God has done for Christ via the *συν*- compound verbs, they therefore have been given authority in the same way as has Christ—at least in some measure (Harris 1991, 77; Arnold 1989, 165). But this is to go beyond the evidence in Ephesians. According to Harris, Ephesians does not deny that believers have been granted such power and authority, but nowhere in Ephesians are believers spoken of as having any kind of authority over the evil powers, and, in fact, the nature of the battle against the evil powers is far more subtle, as will be demonstrated in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

⁸² That Eph 2 is a listing of the triumphs of God in Christ over the evil powers—i.e., his 'mighty deeds of salvation'—may provide a justification for the use of *σῶζω* as a perfect passive participle. The construction with this verb has occasioned no small amount of debate regarding the extent to which eschatology is realized in Ephesians, and the bearing of this on the issue of authorship. According to some scholars, the emphasis on realized eschatology is a significant step beyond the undisputed Pauline letters (e.g., Lindemann 1975, 137; Schnackenburg 1991, 98; Gnllka 1971, 119). According to Lincoln, however, the difference between Ephesians and the undisputed Paulines on this score can easily be overstated (1990, 104; cf. also O'Brien 1999, 169; MacDonald 2000, 232). Gese maintains that it is inappropriate to conclude that there are non-Pauline formulations present here: 'Betrachtet man die aus der Paulustradition übernommenen Wendungen, so läßt sich feststellen, daß hier zwar nicht wörtlich, aber inhaltlich die Grundgedanken der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre adäquat wiedergegeben sind. In der Zusammenstellung dieser Grundaussagen über die Rechtfertigung kann dem Verfasser nicht der Vorwurf einer unpaulinischen Denkweise gemacht werden' (1997, 164-65). While the point must not be pressed too far, it is worth pointing out that if the appropriate framework for the present discussion is the rehearsal of the 'mighty deeds of salvation' by which God in Christ has rescued people from the evil rulers that held them in captivity, the usage of *σῶζω* in a perfect construction is quite natural. At the same time it is worth noting that one must not be distracted into downplaying elements in Ephesians that might be at variance with the undisputed Paulines out of a desire to make the former appear more likely to be genuinely by Paul. The extent to which a number of the undisputed epistles differ from each other easily encompasses that to which

to stress the divine initiative in salvation, as this interjection demonstrates, and he will reinforce the point in vv. 8-10.⁸³

The Purpose of God in His Triumph (2:7-10)

The purpose of this dramatic rescue is given in v. 7, which begins with ἵνα. God has brought his salvation in order to demonstrate his great saving power and the riches of his kindness throughout the coming ages. This is an emphasis found in the *berakah* of 1:3-14, with the repeated theme of the ultimate purpose of God's salvation being the praise of his glory (cf. 1:6, 12, 14). Again, it is tempting to see a direct reference to the hostile powers in the phrase τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις.⁸⁴ A number of scholars argue that this phrase can be translated as 'the hostile aeons' with the participle translated in the sense of 'attacking', a sense it has in Luke 11:22, so that the purpose of God in saving people is to demonstrate directly to the evil powers how great is his power and grace. A temporal reference, however, is more likely.⁸⁵ In order to see the aeons as hostile powers here, the preposition εἰς would be expected, instead of ἐν. The latter preposition makes the translation 'among' a possibility, but the former would have given the sense of a display 'to' the powers.⁸⁶

Two statements follow in vv. 8-10 that substantiate and support the design of God to magnify his saving power through his work of salvation and rescue.⁸⁷ Both statements are introduced by γὰρ and betray a polemical edge, stressing the notion that God alone has brought salvation, triumphing over the evil powers, without the aid of any human agent, thereby excluding human boasting.

First, in vv. 8-9, the author recapitulates his interjection from v. 5, arguing that it is by grace that his readers have been saved, through faith (τῇ γὰρ χάριτί

Ephesians varies from one or another of the undisputed Paulines. In the end, this issue must not distract from an investigation of the argument of Ephesians taken on its own terms.

⁸³ Bouttier states that 'on retrouve le droit fil de l'évangile paulinien où l'initiative rédemptrice apparaît comme unilatérale, renversante' (1991, 102).

⁸⁴ Lindemann 1975, 129-30; Schlier 1971, 112-14; Kitchen 1994, 61.

⁸⁵ Hoehner 2002, 338; Schnackenburg 1991, 97; MacDonald 2000, 233; Lincoln 1990, 110; Gnika 1971, 121.

⁸⁶ Perkins 2000, 11:392. Barth's suggestion that God is involved in a cosmic lawsuit against the powers and authorities (1974, 238-42; cf. also Kreitzer 1997, 74) misapplies a variety of images to the present context (cf. Hoehner 2002, 337).

⁸⁷ Both instances of γὰρ substantiate the claim made in v. 7 (cf. Muddiman 2001, 112). Lincoln and O'Brien claim that the second γὰρ further grounds the claim made in v. 8, that salvation is a divine gift, not of human origin or the result of human works (Lincoln 1990, 113; O'Brien 1999, 178).

ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως). He then contends that the initiative for God's gracious and powerful rescue resides in God alone, ruling out any thought of this move of God originating elsewhere. He contends that this salvation is 'not from you, it is the gift of God' (οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον) (v. 8).⁸⁸ In v. 9, it is 'not from works, so that no one may boast' (οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μή τις καυχῆσθαι).

These statements recall passages in the OT where human boasting is strictly forbidden in light of God's saving acts. According to Bouttier, 'Cela ne vient pas de vous reprend un theme frequent chez les prophètes. Dieu sauve son peuple à l'exclusion de toute autre initiative ou tout autre concours'.⁸⁹ God alone has done it, and human boasting diminishes the clarity of the display of God's power (1 Sam 2:3; Ps 20:7; 34:2; 75:4; 97:7; Isa 10:15; 20:5). This notion grows in force when taken together with the thrust of v. 10.

The second γὰρ (v. 10) introduces another statement in support of v. 7. Many have rightly noted the 'new creation' imagery present here, with the noun ποίημα and the participle κτισθέντες. But with the noun ποίημα the polemic against human boasting continues, referring not merely to the fact of the new creation, but that this work of God is *his* creation, *his* doing, and not ours.⁹⁰ As Lindemann states, the author 'gibt . . . eine Begründung dafür, weshalb ein Selbstruhm nicht in Frage kommt; und er verweist zugleich auf ethische Konsequenzen: Wir sind Gottes Gebilde, seine (neue) Schöpfung'.⁹¹

The language in v. 8, along with its basic thrust, is similar to that in Ps 100:3 (LXX 99:3). In the call to worship in Ps 100:3 (99:3), the confession αὐτὸς ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ οὐξ ἡμεῖς ('he has made us and not we ourselves') is similar to οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν ('not from you') and αὐτοῦ γὰρ ἐσμεν ποίημα ('for we are his creation') of v. 10. Both of these appear in a context that calls the people of God to recognize that their status as such depends exclusively on the initiative and creative power of God, ruling out human boasting.

⁸⁸ The neuter pronoun τοῦτο is best seen as referring to 8a as a whole, and not merely to either χάριτί or πίστεως (Hoehner 2002, 343; Lincoln 1990, 112; Best 1998, 226; O'Brien 1999, 175; Schlier 1971, 115; Gnllka 1971, 129; Schnackenburg 1991, 98).

⁸⁹ 1991, 106.

⁹⁰ Best 1998, 230. Cf. also Barth 1974, 226.

⁹¹ Lindemann 1985, 41.

With the participle *κτισθέντες*, new creation is brought to the fore. Believers were created in Christ Jesus for good works,⁹² which have been prepared in advance by God, indicating that God has created his people for righteousness and obedience.⁹³

The purpose of this brief mention of ‘good works’ is often missed, as a number of commentators suggest that this amounts to an exhortation to produce good works. According to Kreitzer, the author in vv. 8-10 moves ‘to draw out some practical implications for Christian living’.⁹⁴ For Schnackenburg, this is an explicit and sudden turn from highlighting the grace of God in salvation to stressing the demand for good works: This ‘call to an ethical change’ is ‘an almost violent turn from the divine acts of salvation to the responsible behaviour of Christians’. Further,

In these emphatic clauses the author reveals his pragmatic concern for the addressees. They should on the one hand not praise themselves but on the other make every effort to raise themselves above their heathen environment through a Christian way of life.⁹⁵

But this completely misconstrues the thrust of this brief section. That the good works which believers carry out were prepared beforehand by God is not an exhortation actually to perform them, but rather a further piece of evidence marshaled by the author to prove that this salvation is God’s work exclusively—even the good works in which believers inevitably will engage are the work and

⁹² The controversy surrounding ‘works of the law’ is not in view here (contra Schlier 1971, 116; Mußner 1982, 67). This occurrence of *ἔργων* refers to human deeds in general and not to works done in obedience to the Mosaic Law (Lincoln 1990, 112; Jeal 2000, 142; Caird 1976, 53).

⁹³ The concept that the good works in which believers will engage have been prepared in advance—i.e., before the foundation of the world—by God is troublesome to a number of writers and commentators, who argue that this amounts to determinism (Cf. the discussions in Best 1998, 231-32; Schlier 1971, 117; Abbott 1897, 54-55). On an alternative view, the dative pronoun *οἷς* is read as a dative of reference and an implicit *ἡμᾶς* is seen as the object of the transitive verb *προητοίμασεν*, resulting in the translation: ‘created in Christ Jesus for good works with reference to which he prepared us’ (Muddiman 2001, 113; Abbott 1897, 54-55). Those who hold to this view point to Pauline texts which speak of believers themselves as objects of election, but not the good works in which they walk (e.g., Rom 9:23; 2 Tim 2:21; 3:17; Tit 3:1) (Muddiman 2001, 113). Such a reading can hardly be sustained, however. There is no *ἡμᾶς*, and it appears that *οἷς* is a dative by attraction to *ἔργοις ἀγαθοῖς*, resulting in the translation: ‘created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, in order that we might walk in them’ (Jeal 2000, 144; Lincoln 1990, 115; O’Brien 1999, 181; Bratcher and Nida 1982, 48). Further, this need not point towards determinism, but merely indicates that God has created his people for righteous living.

⁹⁴ Kreitzer 1997, 71.

⁹⁵ Schnackenburg 1991, 97.

gift of God, the product of grace. This final clause highlights the transformative power of God. The occurrence of *περιπατήσωμεν* forms an *inclusio* with *περιπατήσατε* in v. 2: Whereas formerly the readers ‘walked’ (v. 2) in transgressions and sins, remaining in death, they now ‘walk’ in good works.

The suggestion that vv. 8-10 contain a polemic directed against human boasting in the face of God’s mighty act of salvation is strengthened by the fact that in a number of Divine Warrior narratives in the OT there are clear narrative devices that highlight the sole activity of Yahweh vis-à-vis any human aid. Not only this, but contexts that speak of the mighty deeds of Yahweh often contain strict warnings against human boasting—which would detract from the clarity of the display of Yahweh’s power and might, robbing him of glory.

At the climax of the David and Goliath narrative, just after the stone slung by David knocks the giant to the ground, the narrative pauses in v. 50 to remind the reader: ‘but there was no sword in David’s hand’. The purpose of this note is to stress that the confrontation between the two combatants was really a conflict between Yahweh and the gods of the Philistines. Repeatedly throughout the narrative, David makes clear that it is Yahweh who has been affronted by the challenge of Goliath,⁹⁶ and in his speech, he claims that it is the power of Yahweh that is on display (1 Sam 17:45-47).⁹⁷

The narrative in Judges 6:1-7:22 emphasizes in several ways that Yahweh in his role as Divine Warrior—and not anyone else—has provided deliverance and salvation for Israel. After Yahweh appears to Gideon and commissions him to fight for Israel, Gideon summons 32,000 men. Yahweh protests that this great number will obscure the fact that he alone will grant the victory to Israel, ‘for Israel would become boastful, saying, “My own power has delivered me”’ (7:2). That Yahweh the Divine Warrior fights for Israel and alone grants victory must be unambiguous.⁹⁸ A test brings the number of men down to 300, and with these

⁹⁶ David is the only one in the narrative who recognizes that the main problem is that Goliath, ‘this uncircumcised Philistine’, is taunting Yahweh, since the reproach cast on the armies of Israel extends naturally to their God. This reproach must be ‘removed’ (נָסָה, v. 26), and so David pledges to strike down Goliath and to ‘remove’ (נָסָה, v. 46) his head in order to ‘remove’ the reproach and to vindicate Yahweh the Divine Warrior, whose standing had been called into question by Goliath and the threat of the Philistines (vv. 46b-47).

⁹⁷ In his speech, David states that he comes armed only with the name of ‘Yahweh of hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת), the God of the armies of Israel’.

⁹⁸ Webb 1987, 150.

Yahweh will deliver Israel, giving Midian into their hands (v. 7).⁹⁹ In addition to the tiny fighting force of Israel, they do no actual fighting, but simply blow trumpets, dash pitchers, and shout ‘a sword for Yahweh and for Gideon!’ (v. 20). The victory is clearly Yahweh’s in that he creates a fatal confusion—a common weapon in divine warfare—causing the soldiers of Midian to turn on each other (v. 22).

In the same way, Eph 2:8-10 highlights that God’s saving activity, his rescue of his people and his triumph over the powers, has been done by his hand alone, and by his own initiative. Any attempt on the part of those whom God has delivered from the state of death in transgressions and sins to take credit for moving the hand of God to save them would detract from God’s glory and power. His saving power is exercised on behalf of those who do not deserve it, and solely at the initiative of God’s gracious desire, driven by mercy and love.

Threat (2:11-12)

In the second and parallel section, vv. 11-16, the author dwells on the triumph of Christ over the law, overcoming the deep division within humanity created by it. The passage follows the same ‘then-now’ pattern as the first, and again is framed by an *inclusio*, with the repetition of similar words and phrases in vv. 12 and 19.¹⁰⁰ Just as the author described the desperate situation with an extended anacoluthon in vv. 2-3, he does so again in vv. 11-12.¹⁰¹ These features serve the same function as in the first section, vividly portraying the desperate situation prior to the triumph of God in Christ.

The two sections—vv. 1-10 and 11-16—contain a significant difference in the presentation of the actors involved in the conflict. Whereas in vv. 1-10 it is God who triumphs in Christ over his enemies, in the latter section, Christ himself goes about accomplishing victory. This shift reflects the movement in Psalm 110, in which Yahweh subjects enemies to his anointed king before the king himself goes out to conquer his enemies. Further, the enemies are different in the two sections: In vv. 1-10, they are the evil angelic powers which rule the present age,

⁹⁹ The test is most likely completely random, devised solely as a means for Yahweh to choose whom he wanted to go and fight for him (Soggin 1981, 137; contra Klein 1988, 56).

¹⁰⁰ Schnackenburg 1991, 120.

¹⁰¹ Jeal 2000, 149.

while in vv. 11-16 the enemy over which Christ triumphs is the law depicted as an ontological power, which has wrought deep division within humanity.¹⁰²

The writer calls his readers to ‘remember’ (μνημονεύετε, v. 11) their past alienation from the covenantal privileges of Israel. While many of his readers may not have thought in terms of their being separated from the purposes of God in the world, the author is inviting them to think about the past along with him, reflecting upon the well-known tension between Jews and non-Jews from his own Jewish-Christian perspective.¹⁰³ The author paints this alienation in theologically dramatic and desperate terms.

His aim vv. 11-12 is not to focus on the privileges of Israel which the Gentile readers formerly lacked, and of which they now partake.¹⁰⁴ Nor is his purpose to highlight the alienation between the Gentiles and God—or all of humanity and God.¹⁰⁵ Rather, the primary focus is on the profound social alienation that existed formerly between Jews and Gentiles, and whatever ‘privileges’ the author mentions are brought into view for this purpose. As M. Gese states, ‘Die Trennung von Heiden und Juden ist das Thema, das die ganze Perikope Eph 2,11-18 bestimmt. . . . Im Gegenüber zu Israel wird die Verlorenheit der Heiden aufgezeigt und die tiefe Differenz beider Menscheitsgruppen herausgearbeitet’.¹⁰⁶

These privileges are not depicted in the same way as the advantages belonging to Israel in Rom 9:1-5, but rather as the source of the fundamental

¹⁰² Leivestad is correct in stating that ‘The law is conceived of as a hostile power which must be defeated to make possible firstly a union of Jews and Gentiles, secondly their reconciliation to God’ (1954, 152). This conception raises the question, however, regarding how Christ can be seen to be waging war against the Mosaic Law, which itself was given by God as a gift to Israel. The apocalyptic frame of Ephesians may assist in coming to a satisfactory solution, wherein the cosmos has been corrupted by those supra-human figures to whom God had delegated authority over his good creation. The law was given into such a situation and has become a ‘circumstantial accomplice in a cosmic revolt’ (Longman and Reid 1995, 161), having been hijacked by the rebellious cosmic powers and manipulated to further their purposes of exacerbating divisions within humanity. Das notes that Paul signals the perspective from which he is discussing the Mosaic Law by the genitive constructions he attaches to νόμος (Das 2003, 155-65). The expression τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν (2:15) indicates that the author has in view the function of the Mosaic Law in separating Israel from the nations through mandated practices that maintain ethnic purity. This basic distinction provided for in the Mosaic Law has been manipulated by the evil cosmic powers to divide humanity in a profoundly harmful way. Christ has triumphed over the law, as seen from this perspective, overcoming the division and destroying the enmity between Jews and Gentiles.

¹⁰³ Schnackenburg 1991, 102-3; O’Brien 1999, 185.

¹⁰⁴ Contra Rese 1990, 26-27; Hoehner 2002, 353-57.

¹⁰⁵ Contra Stuhlmacher 1986, 190.

¹⁰⁶ 1997, 112.

division—at least from the author’s standpoint—within humanity. They are the divisive fault lines created by the Mosaic Law. Best states that the previous position of Gentile unbelievers is given in theological terms, and is not a sociological analysis.¹⁰⁷ Yet, even though the descriptions are theologically oriented—since Israel is in view, they could hardly be otherwise—the division within humanity is in view here, and the analysis of the previous situation relates to the social alienation created by the law between Jews and Gentiles.

The manner in which the author mentions Israel, the Jews, and the law is decidedly subdued, and seems to be more of a description ‘from below’, rather than ‘from above’. In v. 11, the author refers to his Gentile readers as the ‘so-called uncircumcision’ (οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία), a term used by the ‘so-called circumcision’ (τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς).¹⁰⁸ Rather than being glorified as a mark of election by Israel’s God, this circumcision is that done ‘in the flesh, by hands’ (ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου), phrases deliberately chosen to emphasize the action of man vis-à-vis the action of God.¹⁰⁹ This is, as Lindemann notes, hardly the ‘Selbstverständnis als Gottesvolk’.¹¹⁰

While the five descriptions in v. 12 speak of the covenantal privileges enjoyed by Israel, the social alienation, specifically the ‘outsider’ status of the Gentile readers, is still prominent. They were ‘strangers’ (ξένοι) to the covenants of promise’, outside the ‘commonwealth (πολιτείας) of Israel’, and not a part of the community that hoped in the coming of the Messiah. Again, the author is not extolling the privileges enjoyed by Israel vis-à-vis the nations, but highlighting the points of social division. Whatever defined the people of Israel also served to exclude Gentiles at ‘outsiders’.

This is the dark and desperate situation depicted by the writer. Whereas God had intended Israel to be a light to the Gentiles and for humanity to experience reconciliation among nations and with God, the law given to Israel had

¹⁰⁷ Best 1992, 51.

¹⁰⁸ This language does not, as Turner suggests, imply the presence of a Judaizing group, using ἀκροβυστία to intimidate Gentile believers (1995, 144).

¹⁰⁹ The term χειροποίητος is used in the LXX to refer to idols (Lev 26:1; Isa 2:18), an idol’s sanctuary (Isa 16:12), false gods (Isa 11:9), and images (Lev 26:30), highlighting that gods other than the true God were made with human hands vis-à-vis the living God. It is also used throughout the NT to refer to anything that is the result of human action over against divine action, and that which is of the old, natural order over against the new creation of God (Mark 14:58; Heb 9:11; Acts 7:48; 2 Cor 5:1; Col 2:11) (MacDonald 2000, 241; Best 1998, 51).

¹¹⁰ Lindemann 1985, 46.

created a fundamental division within humanity—a situation with no apparent solution. Against this dark backdrop the author announces the triumph of Christ in reconciling the two groups within humanity by his death (v. 13). Whereas the Gentile readers were formerly ‘outsiders’, they now have been made an essential part of the new creation people of God.

Triumph over the Law (2:13-16)

Verse 13 introduces the powerful intervention of God into the hopeless situation. Just as in 2:4, ‘l’initiative inconditionnelle de Dieu surgit pour renverser la situation’.¹¹¹ Those who were once ‘far off’ (μακράν) have been brought ‘near’ (ἐγγύς) ‘by the blood of Christ’ (ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ). This is not a reference to reconciliation between Gentiles and God,¹¹² but rather to Gentiles being united with Jews, the people from whom they had formerly been separated. At the same time, this bringing near has been accomplished ‘in Christ Jesus’, which implies that the two groups who have been brought near to each other are now also brought near to God.

In vv. 14-19, the author elaborates on how this triumph was accomplished. Christ has made peace by destroying the division between Jews and Gentiles and by creating a New Humanity in which those from any and every background may peacefully co-exist.

The author, elaborating on his statement in v. 13, notes in v. 14 that the bringing of the Gentiles ‘near’ has been accomplished in Christ because ‘he is our peace’ (αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν). This statement builds on and reflects the locative use of the phrase ‘in Christ’ throughout Ephesians, indicating that ‘Christ’ is the *place* where the unification of Jewish and Gentile Christians has been accomplished, the sphere in which God has worked to bring salvation to his people. It is Christ who ‘has made the two one’ (ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρωθεν ἓν), accomplishing peace by making one new entity of the two formerly divided peoples. Neither of these groups is what they formerly were, rather they have each become part of something completely new and are now joined together as one.

¹¹¹ Bouttier 1991, 114.

¹¹² Contra O’Brien 1999, 190; Lindemann, 1975, 155; Hoehner 2002, 362.

This unification is made possible because Christ has ‘destroyed the middle wall of partition’ (τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας), a reference to the Mosaic Law that had separated Jews from Gentiles in every possible way.¹¹³

Christ has ‘abolished the enmity in his flesh, the law of commandments in ordinances’ (τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας). The two nouns ἔχθραν and νόμον stand in apposition, so that the law itself is depicted as the source of the enmity between Jews and Gentiles.¹¹⁴ Christ has brought peace and united the two into one by abolishing the law and, along with it, the enmity within humanity caused by it.¹¹⁵

Two purpose clauses introduced by ἵνα in v. 15b reveal the goal of this destruction.¹¹⁶ The first is that Christ ‘might from the two create in himself one New Humanity, making peace’ (ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην). This ‘New Humanity’ is the corporate church made up of Jewish and Gentile Christians,¹¹⁷ and is intimately connected with the person of Christ, as seen in the phrase ‘in himself’ (ἐν αὐτῷ). In creating this New

¹¹³ The identification of this ‘middle wall of partition’ (τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ) has been debated. Some scholars contend that it refers to the Jerusalem temple feature of the parapet which separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of Israel (Muddiman 2001, 128; MacDonald 2000, 244; Kitchen 1994, 65). Such a reference would only make sense, however, if the author was arguing that Gentiles now partake of specifically Jewish privileges (Best 1998, 254; Caird 1976, 58). The writer argues in this passage that Jews and Gentiles are now both part of one New Humanity, not that they are the continuation of Israel, or that Gentiles have now become Jews. Further, it is not at all clear how much such a reference would have resonated with Gentile Christians in Asia Minor, especially since temples in that region did not have the feature of the temple wall (Best 1998, 254). Lastly, there is no mention of such a dividing wall in the OT accounts of the temple’s construction. It makes better sense to regard the dividing wall as the law itself (Caird 1976, 58; Jeal 2000, 155; Lindemann 1975, 173; Turner 1994, 1231; Lincoln 1990, 141-42; Gnllka 1971, 140; O’Brien 1999, 196; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 115; Schnackenburg 1991, 115). The term φραγμός is used in Isa 5:2 (LXX) and Mark 12:1 to refer to the protective hedge that God placed around Israel, his vineyard (Caird 1976, 58). Both the law itself, later oral tradition, and the Letter of Aristaeas (‘the legislator [Moses] surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the other peoples in any matter, being thus kept pure in body and soul... worshipping the one almighty God’ [139]) speak of the law as a hedge, built to protect Israel from overstepping it (Turner 1994, 1231). Such a hedge, being made up of the detailed holiness code and the separate way of life which the Torah and subsequent tradition demanded, would not allow for easy mixture, and served to separate Jews from Gentiles, not only religiously, but socially as well, causing deep division and hostility.

¹¹⁴ According to Gnllka, ‘Die durch das Gesetz begründete Apartheid war die Ursache für das Mißtrauen den Juden gegenüber. Ebenso war sie die Ursache für manche Skepsis des Juden dem Heiden gegenüber’ (1971, 140).

¹¹⁵ Gesse 1997, 128-29; Mußner 1982, 76-77.

¹¹⁶ Both purpose clauses following ἵνα in vv. 15-16 have a subjunctive verb followed by a participial phrase (κτίσῃ . . . ποιῶν εἰρήνην; ἀποκαταλλάξῃ . . . ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν, ‘that he might create . . . making peace’; ‘that he might reconcile . . . killing the enmity’).

¹¹⁷ Jeal 2000, 155-56; Gesse 1997, 134-37; Turner 1994, 1231; Gombis 2002, 265. Contra Best, who seems to suggest that the ‘one new man’ is an ideal type of the new individual believer (1998, 262-63; cf. also Mußner 1955, 87).

Humanity in himself, Christ was ‘making peace’ (ποιῶν εἰρήνην), healing the deep rift between Jew and Gentile. The New Humanity, therefore, is the realm where peace reigns, the place where former factions within humanity are united.¹¹⁸ This close identification of the New Humanity and Christ continues in the second purpose clause, found in v. 16: καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ (‘and that he might reconcile both in one body to God’). While ‘one body’ here refers to the New Humanity, the slight ambiguity highlights the close relationship of Christ and the church, ‘his body’ (cf. Eph 1:23; 4:12; 5:30).¹¹⁹

This reconciliation was effected by the death of Jesus Christ, as indicated by the prepositional phrase διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ in v. 16b. The final participial phrase in v. 16 contains a striking paradox: In reconciling Jewish and Gentile Christians into one body, Christ was ‘killing the enmity’ (ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔξθραν). As Muddiman notes, it is usually ‘the enmity that does the killing’.¹²⁰ This killing of the enmity which had previously characterized the relationship between Jews and Gentiles recalls the paradoxical warfare of Yahweh as the Divine Warrior in the Zion Psalms, where he is depicted as waging war against the very weapons of warfare themselves, thus bringing peace (Pss 46:10; 76:2).

In divine warfare contexts, the assertion of a deity’s supremacy over all competing powers is followed by a listing of the triumphs of the exalted one. Eph 2:1-16 plays this role as it recounts the manner in which the exaltation of Christ over all cosmic powers is vindicated.

Victory Shout (2:17)

Verse 17 contains an enigmatic reference to the ‘preaching’ of Christ. According to the author, ‘coming, [Christ] preached peace to you the far off and peace to the near’ (ἐλθὼν εὐηγγελίσσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς). Scholars debate the time reference for the preaching ministry of Christ. One view is that this refers to the earthly preaching ministry of

¹¹⁸ Jeal 2000, 156.

¹¹⁹ Gnlika 1971, 143; cf. Schlier 1971, 135; Hanson 1946, 145-46; Dawes 1998, 158, 172. Mayer points out that the ‘horizontal’ dimension of reconciliation is founded upon the ‘vertical’ dimension: ‘Die neue Einheit der Menschen entspringt nicht allein der Versöhnung untereinander, sondern der gemeinsamen, gleichzeitigen Versöhnung mit Gott’ (Mayer 2002, 135).

¹²⁰ Muddiman 2001, 136; cf. also Yoder Neufeld’s rendering, ‘murdering hostility’ (2002, 112).

Jesus.¹²¹ Schlier, on the other hand, argues that this preaching of Jesus took place after his ascension to the heavenly realm and that it has in view Jesus' preaching to the hostile powers.¹²² Against this view, however, is the fact that the preaching is done to those who are far off and those who are near, clear references to Gentiles and Jews.

Others view the preaching as that done through the apostles after the ascension of Jesus.¹²³ Sandnes argues that none of the recipients of this letter had ever heard Jesus in the flesh so that his preaching to them could not refer to his earthly ministry.¹²⁴ Still another view is that the cross and resurrection of Christ is viewed as the preaching of the good news of peace. The preaching is then a summary of vv. 14-16, so that the effect of the death of Christ on the cross is 'his proclamation of peace with God to both the Gentile readers and Jews'.¹²⁵ The author is not so much discussing when Christ made this announcement as he is depicting the work of Christ throughout vv. 14-18 as one package, so that Christ is the 'peace-announcer, the peace-bringer, and the embodiment of peace'.¹²⁶

In our view, Jeal's suggestion regarding the 'preaching' of Christ is most satisfying. The author is depicting the appearance of Christ, along with his death, resurrection and enthronement as cosmic lord, as the proclamation of peace, the announcement of the triumph of God in Christ in overcoming the deep division within humanity. Such a triumphant note is hardly surprising in light of the ideology of divine warfare and may be understood as a 'victory shout'. Similar devices are found in other divine warfare contexts, such as Revelation 12:1-12. After God has defeated the dragon, throwing him to the earth (vv. 8-9), a loud voice in heaven acclaims the sovereign kingship of God: 'the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have now come because the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down' (v. 10).¹²⁷

¹²¹ Stuhlmacher 1986, 191; Muddiman 2001, 137; Fischer 1973, 131-32; Mußner 1955, 101.

¹²² Schlier 1971, 137-39.

¹²³ Caird 1976, 60; Gnllka 1971, 146; O'Brien 1999, 207; Sandnes 1991, 229; Hoehner 2002, 385; Abbott 1897, 66-67; Schnackenburg 1991, 118.

¹²⁴ Sandnes 1991, 229.

¹²⁵ Lincoln 1990, 148-49; cf. also Gese 1997, 120-23; Turner 1994, 1232.

¹²⁶ Jeal 2000, 157.

¹²⁷ Such shouts of acclamation or declarations of the supreme sovereignty of the divine warrior are typically found during the processional of the triumphant deity into his temple (e.g., Pss 24:7-10; 29:9b; 98:4-9). I have suggested elsewhere (Gombis 2004, 415) that the participle ἐλθὼν is best understood as depicting the procession of Christ as a victorious divine warrior to

Celebration (2:18)

Christ proclaims ‘peace’ to both groups of those who have been reconciled—both ‘far off’ and ‘the near’. This peace is grounded upon the work of Christ which is now summed up in v. 18. Peace may be proclaimed to both groups because (ὅτι) through Christ both groups now have access by one spirit to the father (δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα). While the horizontal dimension—the relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians—has been mainly in view to this point, the vertical dimension now comes to the fore. It is access to God that is enjoyed by both groups ‘through him’.¹²⁸

In divine warfare compositions, the people who are loyal to the supreme deity celebrate his victory at his temple (e.g., Pss 24:3-6; 47:5-9; 48:8-14; Rev 7:13-15). This is the role filled by v. 18 in the present divine warfare context. Those who have been brought together in one body now enjoy access to the father by one spirit in a scene depicting the formerly divided groups now united in worship of the father. The imagery suggested by the term προσαγωγὴν is that of the cult from the OT. The term προσάγειν is used in the LXX of bringing offerings in order to come before God (e.g., LXX Lev 1:3; 3:3; 4:14). Further, the present context features temple imagery (vv. 19-22) so that the imagery of the worship of God by the New Humanity is in view.¹²⁹ According to Gese, ‘Dieser

assume his throne. The proclamation of Christ, on this scenario, takes place during the enthronement of Christ as cosmic lord at the right hand of God in 1:20-23. It appears, however, that the author conceives of the entire work of Christ as his triumph, and of his preaching of peace.

¹²⁸ The force of the dative expression ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι is highly disputed. Most scholars regard it as a dative of sphere so that the phrase indicates the ‘place’ of access to God for both groups (Hoehner 2002, 389; Fee 1994, 683; Lincoln 1990, 149-50; Jeal 2000, 162; Dawes 1998, 174; Barth 1974, 267-68; Mußner 1955, 104). This is seen as best explaining the use of the modifier ἐνὶ in the clause, and makes good sense as standing in direct contrast with ἐν σαρκί of v. 11. It appears strained, however, to view ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι as parallel to ἐν σαρκί from v. 11. The author does not make the point that Gentiles who were formerly so ‘in the flesh’ are now something different ‘in one spirit’. ‘In the flesh’ in v. 11 does not describe the sphere in which Gentiles formerly were ‘being’, and ‘in one spirit’ involves both groups, not just the Gentile readers. Further, the notion of sphere is covered by other expressions in the immediate context, and the author seems to go to great lengths to stress that the sphere in which Jewish and Gentile believers are now united is ‘in Christ’. It is better to read this dative expression as instrumental, so that the spirit is seen as the one who effects this relationship between Jewish and Gentile Christians in the body of Christ (cf. Schnackenburg 1991, 119; O’Brien 1999, 209).

¹²⁹ Gese 1997, 198; Lincoln 1990, 149; O’Brien 1999, 209.

Gedanke des kultischen Zugangs zu Gott wird in der christlichen Gemeinde nun für alle Gläubigen Wirklichkeit'.¹³⁰

This section closes by again noting the reversal of the situation that formerly plagued the readers (v. 19). The 'once-now' schema is brought to completion: whereas 'at that time' (τῷ καιρῷ ἐκεῖνῳ, v. 12a) they were outside the πολιτείας of Israel and ξένοι to the covenants, they are 'no longer' (οὐκέτι, v. 19a) ξένοι, but are now συμπολῖται ('fellow citizens'), along with 'the holy ones' (τῶν ἁγίων).¹³¹ Another device highlighting the reversal of the situation and serving as a transition to the following section is the elaborate paronomasia based on the word οἶκος. In vv. 19-22, words with the οἰκ- root are used six times, two of which appear in v. 19. The author's Gentile readers are no longer πάροικοι ('strangers'), but are rather οἰκεῖοι ('household members').

Temple-building (2:20-22)

Having listed the triumphs that establish and vindicate the exaltation of Christ over the powers ruling the present evil age, the author explains in vv. 20-22 that this new creation, the New Humanity, is also the place where God now dwells by his Spirit. The church is God's new temple, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as the foundation stone. As such it stands as a lasting monument to the exaltation of Christ.

¹³⁰ 1997, 198.

¹³¹ Some scholars view τῶν ἁγίων as referring to heavenly angels (Schlier 1971, 140-41; Gnika 1971, 154; Lindemann 1975, 183; Mußner 1982, 89-91). There is good support for this reading, since the OT refers to angels as 'holy ones' (Job 15:15; Ps 89:5, 6), and this term is used elsewhere in the Pauline corpus to refer to angels (e.g. 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7, 10). Further, in a number of Qumran texts, the elect community shares fellowship with the angels—also known as 'holy ones' (1QS 11.7, 8; 1QH 3.21-23; 6:10-14)—an idea which would fit the present context quite well. The idea of believers sharing in a heavenly fellowship is also found in Paul (Phil 3:20; Gal 4:26) and other parts of the NT (Heb 12:22). In a context which reflects the ideology of divine warfare, Rev 7:9-14, the angels and slain followers of Jesus join in heavenly worship and celebration around the heavenly throne. Because of the cosmic or heavenly setting of Ephesians, it is difficult to reject this position, but it makes better sense to view this as a reference to all believers. This same term occurs elsewhere in Ephesians in reference to believers (1:1, 15, 18; 3:8; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18), and it must be assumed that the usage is consistent unless there was a strong indicator in the context that it must mean something different. Lincoln also points out that the συν-compounds in vv. 21, 22 and in 3:6 have reference to the unity of the church, indicating that the phrase συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων ought to have a similar reference (1990, 151). The burden of this section is to demonstrate that Christ has dramatically overcome the negative effects of the Law upon humanity by uniting Jewish and Gentile believers in Christ, so that a reference to all believers, even those glorified in heaven, makes best sense in the present context. The letter's Gentile readers have been made to be a unified part of the cosmic fellowship of the followers of Jesus. Cf. also Bauckham 2003, 79-83.

The existence of the temple in Jerusalem reminded Israel that their God was superior to all others and was indeed sovereign ruler of the universe. Similarly, in the ANE texts mentioned in the previous chapter, deities who triumphed in combat with other deities earned the right to have a temple built in their honor.¹³² In the same way the triumphant Christ who is exalted as cosmic lord over the evil powers and authorities dwells in his temple which consists of his corporate people, the church.

Verses 19b-22 are filled with ‘household’ terms and temple imagery in order to stress this notion of the church as the dwelling place of God in Christ. Words built around the οἰκ- stem—‘house’-related words—appear five times. In v. 19b, both Jewish and Gentile Christians are now citizens ‘with the saints and members of the house of God’ (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ). They are ‘being built’ (ἐποικοδομηθέντες)¹³³ upon a foundation consisting of the apostles and prophets,¹³⁴ with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (ἀκρογωνιάου) (v. 20).¹³⁵ In v. 21, the whole ‘building’ (οἰκοδομή) is ‘being built up

¹³² Kapelrud 1963, 56-62.

¹³³ The aorist passive participle ἐποικοδομηθέντες is a divine passive, pointing to God as the one who constructs this temple made up of the church (Gnilka 1971, 155).

¹³⁴ The phrase τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν is in apposition to τῷ θεμελίῳ so that the foundation consists of the apostles and prophets and not their teaching (Hoehner 2002, 398-99; Caird 1976, 61; Lincoln 1990, 153; Schlier 1971, 142; Best 1998, 280-81; contra Sandnes 1991, 229). Further, the prophets in view here are NT prophets, seen as a separate group from the apostles (Yoder Neufeld 2002, 126; Hoehner 2002, 400-403; Schnackenburg 1991, 122; Best 1998, 281-83; Lincoln 1990, 153; Caird 1976, 61; Muddiman 2001, 142). A few scholars argue that the phrase τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν refers to one group, namely apostles functioning also as prophets (Grudem 1982, 82-105; Turner 1994, 1232). Those who argue for this view do so on the syntactical grounds that in ‘article-substantive-καὶ-substantive’ constructions, there is identity between the two substantives. This view misapplies the ‘Granville Sharp’ rule, however, which has several qualifications, one of which states that this rule does not apply to situations where the καὶ joins two plural nouns. For discussion of this grammatical construction, see Wallace 1996, 270-86.

¹³⁵ Much has been written on how to render the term ἀκρογωνιάου, whether as ‘cornerstone’ (Hoehner 2002, 406; Muddiman 2001, 142; MacDonald 2000, 249; Turner 1994, 1233; Fee 1994, 688; O’Brien 1999, 217; McKelvey 1962; Fung 1982, 103; Schnackenburg 1991, 123; Mußner 1982, 93-95; Mitton 1976, 112-13), or ‘capstone’ (Jeremias 1964, 1:792; Lincoln 1990, 154-56; Hanson 1946, 131; Schlier 1971, 142; Gnilka 1971, 158; Caird 1976, 61; Barth 1974, 271, 317-19; Lindemann 1975, 185-86; Perkins 2000, 11:402). For summaries of the very extensive discussion and the various arguments, see especially Hoehner 2002, 404-7; Lincoln 1990, 154-56; Best 1998, 284-86. One must be careful in analyzing the discussion on this issue to avoid arguments based on the various other images employed in Ephesians, which are each utilized for distinct purposes, and which are not meant to be harmonized into a totality. It does appear that in this immediate and narrow context, the author has in mind the foundational aspect of the ‘building’, so that the ἀκρογωνιάου most likely is referring to that important stone by which every other stone in the foundation and the building itself must be measured (Hoehner 2002, 407). Best, who finds the problem insoluble, rightly captures the thrust of the imagery: ‘In the end, the

(συννοικοδομεῖσθε) into a dwelling (κατοικητήριον) of God by the Spirit' (v. 22).¹³⁶

The author also employs two images side by side—he speaks of the church both as a building and as an organism. As was just discussed, he refers to the church as a building several times in vv. 20-22: 'Having been built' (ἐποικοδομηθέντες, v. 20), the church is a 'building' (οἰκοδμή, v. 21), and 'is being built together' (συννοικοδομεῖσθε, v. 22) into a 'dwelling place' (κατοικητήριον, v. 22). But he also refers to the church as a living organism, in that it 'is growing into a holy temple in the Lord' (αὐξεῖ εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ, v. 21). According to Best, the image of growth does not refer to organic life, but to the process of actually constructing the building, adding brick to brick.¹³⁷ Yet it appears that in Ephesians the growth of the church is not *extensive*, in the sense of adding actual numbers of people to the church, but a growth in maturity—the growth of the corporate people of God in holiness, and into the character of Jesus Christ himself (4:12-16; cf. also 3:20-21).¹³⁸

Just as triumphant deities in the ANE had temples built in their honor, so here in Ephesians 2, the triumphs of the exalted cosmic Lord Christ are memorialized with the building of his temple, the people of God made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers.

Conclusion

Ephesians 2, then, is not a sort of rambling expansion to the thanksgiving and blessing section of chapter 1. Nor is it the incoherent result of a clumsy editing process. There is indeed a coherent argument in 1:1-2:22, wherein the author announces, within the context of praise and worship, the exaltation of Christ to cosmic lordship and then lays out his triumphs over the powers that rule the present fallen age. Chapter 2 follows the logic of divine warfare ideology: The

author wishes to allot to Christ a place in the building different from that of the apostles and prophets and more important than that of either of them' (Best 1998, 286).

¹³⁶ The dative expression ἐν πνεύματι most likely indicates the means by which God's people are his dwelling place, his new temple (Hoehner 2002, 414-15; Lincoln 1990, 158; Fee 1994, 688; O'Brien 1987, 103; Best 1998, 290; cf. Son 2001, 20). Bouttier reads the dative as local, but it makes better sense to read the phrase ἐν κυρίῳ as locative and ἐν πνεύματι as means (1991, 131). An adjectival meaning for ἐν πνεύματι is also unlikely since it would be superfluous (Abbott 1897, 76; Hoehner 2002, 414; contra Schlier 1971, 145; Mußner 1982, 96).

¹³⁷ Best 1998, 287.

¹³⁸ Gombis 2002, 261-62.

triumphs of Christ over the evil powers vindicate the exalted status of the Lord Christ, who announces his victory by proclaiming peace. His people gather to him in unified worship *as* his temple, which he has founded and is building as a lasting monument to his universal sovereign lordship.

CHAPTER 5

THE TRIUMPH OF GOD IN THE IMPRISONMENT OF PAUL

Introduction

After his profound elaboration on the triumphs of God in Christ in Ephesians 2, the writer turns in chapter 3 to portray Paul as praying for his readers. Yet just as the prayer report begins, it is interrupted by a long digression (3:2-13), discussing the ministry given to Paul by God on behalf of the letter's readers. The writer then returns to the prayer report (3:14-19), before concluding with a doxology (3:20-21). More than any other part of Ephesians, this enigmatic chapter seems to stand apart from the rest of the letter, so that scholars have had difficulty discerning the logic that drives it, and the manner in which it relates to the argument of Ephesians.¹

Martin Kitchen has concluded recently that the digression simply is irrelevant to the argument of Ephesians—an unnecessary and distracting detour. He claims that in Ephesians 3 the author is merely portraying Paul as a person of prayer, the ideal self-sacrificial minister, and as one who has received a divine commission. But with respect to the purpose of the digression, Kitchen concedes that 'one is still left wondering why the writer devotes twelve verses to an exposition of Paul's status'.²

More typically, the digression is viewed as an apostolic defense, much like those found in other Pauline letters. Ernest Best, for example, argues that the digression is a justification of Paul's unique apostleship and message. Paul was not just one of the apostles, he was *the* apostle to the Gentiles, and the digression provides the grounds upon which he can describe himself in this way, recounting how he was made an apostle and describing the authority with which he speaks.³ Clinton Arnold reads this passage along a similar line, claiming that the digression is aimed at establishing Paul's apostolic credentials.⁴

John Muddiman claims that the digression strengthens his own case that Ephesians is a composite of genuine apostolic material supplemented by a Pauline

¹ Cf. Reynier: 'La plupart des auteurs considèrent que Ep 3, 1-13 n'est qu'un fragment disparate inséré dans la première partie ou constitue une digression du même ordre que celle de 2, 1-22' (1992, 30).

² Kitchen 1994, 30. Cf. also Jeal 2000, 174-75.

³ Best 1998, 292.

⁴ Arnold 1989, 86. See also Kim 1981, 20-21.

disciple, for he sees this passage as a clear case of Paul's own hand. Regarding its function within Ephesians, however, Muddiman claims that it has only a general thrust, having to do with Paul explaining his ministry to the Gentiles. He claims that it is odd that Paul describes himself as the 'prisoner of Christ Jesus', since his being a prisoner 'is of no relevance to what the writer has to say'. He adds that there is 'no particular reason in Ephesians to stress the fact'.⁵ Since Paul's apostleship is the main concern of the passage, 'we should have expected it to begin "I, Paul apostle to you Gentiles"'.⁶

Each of these readings fails, in one way or another, to do justice to key features of this passage. The digression is not in any sense an explanation or defense of Paul's apostleship, nor an account of how he came to be the apostle to the Gentiles, though this is a common assumption. While the digression is framed by Paul's ministry on behalf of his Gentile readers ('on behalf of *you Gentiles*', v. 1; 'which are *your* glory', v. 13), his imprisonment and 'afflictions' (θλίψεσιν) are decidedly more important factors, both in vv. 1 and 13. The author concludes the digression by portraying Paul as wanting to put to rest any potential concerns his readers might have had because of his situation ('*therefore* [διό] I ask that you not lose heart at my afflictions', v. 13), not by hoping that he has clarified the contours of his apostleship.

Strictly speaking, Paul's apostleship is irrelevant to Eph 3:2-13. While the writer mentions the revelation to the apostles and prophets (v. 5), there is no notion of justifying Paul's right to be among this group, merely that these were the people to whom the mystery had been revealed. There simply is no evidence in this context that this is an apostolic defense. Not only is there a complete lack of a polemic against anyone attacking Paul's apostolic credentials, but a similar absence of an indication of the substance of any such attack.⁷ Further, his discussion of suffering is unlike that in 2 Corinthians 3-4, where suffering points to the authenticity of Paul's ministry.

This dissent from the manner in which Eph 3:2-13 typically is read is strengthened by recent objections of several scholars to the manner in which

⁵ Muddiman 2001, 147.

⁶ Muddiman 2001, 149.

⁷ This differs from 2 Cor 10, where Paul refers to the substance of the attacks against him before responding by drawing a contrast between himself and his opponents (cf. Gaventa, 1986, 312).

Galatians 1-2 traditionally has been read. According to Bernard Lategan, interpreters too often read Galatians through the lens of the Corinthian correspondence with the result that Paul's purpose must be defensive.⁸ His autobiographical remarks are more than a defense of his apostleship, however, but rather amount to what J. H. Schütz calls a 'biography of reversal'.⁹ As John Barclay argues, 'the thread of narrative continuity in Galatians 1-2 is not Paul as such (his experiences and crises) but Paul's story insofar as it represents the experiences and crises of the gospel'.¹⁰ His experience is an example of how the gospel works, in that his life is an actualization of the grace of God.¹¹ I will argue that a similar dynamic is at work in Ephesians 3.

The purpose of the digression is to explain the author's description of Paul as a prisoner in Eph 3:1. It answers an objection that might arise in the minds of the readers regarding Paul's being a prisoner. The writer has just narrated the triumphs of God in Christ that vindicate the exaltation of Christ to the position of Cosmic Lordship. This is followed by the author portraying Paul as in prison, which raises the question, If Christ Jesus is exalted to the position of cosmic supremacy over the powers ruling the present evil age, then why is Paul in prison? Why has the exaltation of Christ resulted in the defeat and humiliation of his servant? This looks less like triumph than a glaring defeat at the hands of the powers that supposedly have been put under the feet of the sovereign Lord Christ. As George Caird states, 'Paul's imprisonment might give the impression that he was the victim, not the victor, of the powers of the old world order'.¹² This apparent discrepancy must somehow be explained, and the digression in vv. 2-13 makes plain that the imprisonment of Paul is not a defeat, but rather *epitomizes* the triumph of God in Christ. The writer does this by revealing to his readers the cosmic dimensions of the ministry given to Paul by God, and that Paul's imprisonment—far from hindering his ministry—actually serves to magnify the triumph of God.¹³

⁸ Lategan 1988, 411.

⁹ Schütz 1975, 133.

¹⁰ Barclay 2002, 141.

¹¹ Gaventa 1986, 313; Barclay 2002, 138-40.

¹² Caird 1976, 67.

¹³ Bouttier notes that classical rhetoricians did not regard a digression as an interruption from the main lines of an argument, but rather recognized that 'la *digression* est un moment majeur de l'argumentation!' (1991, 133). According to the reading for which we will argue below, the digression does indeed play a crucial role in the argument of the letter.

An Epitome of the Triumph of God in Christ

The triumph of God is seen in his using Paul the prisoner, this one who is less than the least of all the saints, in order to accomplish his cosmic purposes. This section will draw out the author's strategy in Ephesians 3 to portray Paul in this paradoxical position: At once he is defeated, suffering utter humiliation as a prisoner,¹⁴ while at the same time playing the cosmically pivotal role as the administrator of God's grace in salvation.

The passage begins as a report, wherein Paul is represented as relaying to his readers the manner in which he is praying for them. At the beginning of his report, the writer identifies Paul as 'the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles' (ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὑπὲρ ὑμῶν τῶν ἐθνῶν).¹⁵ Just after this apparent self-identification, the prayer report is interrupted and he embarks on a lengthy digression in which he discusses the commission given to him by God to reveal and implement the mystery of Christ. As noted above, there is disagreement as to what initiates this digression. I will argue that the writer intends to clarify how it is that Paul's imprisonment can make sense in light of the exaltation of Christ over the powers ruling the present evil age. As he begins the prayer report, the writer is struck by how incongruous it must appear to his readers that Paul is in prison, when he has just listed the triumphs of Christ over the evil powers, supposedly vindicating the status of Christ as Cosmic Lord. In light of the triumph of God in raising and seating Christ at his right hand—the position of ultimate cosmic power and authority—how is it that Paul is in prison? This sounds like defeat, not triumph. The author must answer this potential objection.¹⁶

¹⁴ Imprisonment in the Greco-Roman world 'carried devastating dishonor and shame connotations' (Rapske 2000, 829).

¹⁵ The verb 'to be' is often supplied in order to make v. 1 into a complete sentence: 'I, Paul *am* the prisoner of Christ Jesus for your sake' (Houlden 1977, 296-97; cf. also NRSV). It is more likely, however, that the author simply begins the sentence, before suddenly breaking it off. As Muddiman notes, if ὁ δέσμιος were intended as the predicate, with the verb 'to be' unexpressed, then the definite article would have been dropped and δέσμιος would precede the subject. As it stands, the sentence should be read 'I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus...'. (Muddiman 2001, 148; Hoehner 2002, 418-19).

¹⁶ Westcott reads the passage along similar lines: 'The thought of his helpless position leads St. Paul to unfold its true meaning. His zeal to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles had brought him into bonds. These very bonds, therefore, which might at first sight seem to be a cause of discouragement, really witnessed to the greatness of the work which he had done' (1906, 43). We would place the emphasis on a slightly different note: The author argues that Paul's bonds 'really witnessed' to the triumph of God in the face of an apparent defeat at the hands of the powers.

The writer provides such an answer by giving his readers a correct interpretation of the reality of Paul's situation. That Paul is suffering defeat by being in prison is not merely a partial view of Paul's situation; it is, rather, a faulty interpretation of it. Far from Paul being defeated by the powers of this age, he has been granted a unique and cosmically significant position by God to be the administrator of his plan of salvation and to be directly involved in making known the triumph of God to the defeated rulers and authorities of this age. This is the position upon which the author will elaborate in vv. 2-13.

That the writer senses the need to clarify the nature of his situation is indicated by the manner in which he commences the digression in v. 2 (εἴ γε ἠκούσατε..., 'surely you have heard...'). The expression εἴ γε makes explicit an underlying assumption,¹⁷ which in the present context is that his readers would surely be happy to have Paul praying for them since, even though he is a prisoner, he plays a cosmically vital role in God's unfolding plan of salvation. The author's ironic reference to Paul as 'the prisoner of Christ' (ὁ δέσμιος τοῦ Χριστοῦ 'Ἰησοῦ) would have resonated with those who were fully aware of the contours of Paul's ministry. But Ephesians most likely is written to churches that are unfamiliar with Paul, and the writer needs to make explicit the paradox of Paul's situation so that his imprisonment might rightly be understood.

The writer tells his readers that God has given to Paul 'the administration of the grace of God' (τὴν οἰκονομίαν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 2). The cosmic significance of such a stewardship can hardly be overstated. God has chosen Paul to be the agent of his salvation in the world.¹⁸ As we will see below, the writer claims that it is by means of the proclamation of the gospel by Paul that God calls the church into being, bringing people from darkness to light, freeing them from bondage to sin, and demonstrating, thereby, God's triumph over the powers ruling the present evil age.

¹⁷ O'Brien 1999, 226.

¹⁸ The writer describes this commission as having been given to Paul by God. The phrase 'was given to me' (δοθείσης μοι) is repeated in vv. 2 and 7, and the author claims that Paul 'was made a minister' (ἐγενήθην διάκονος) of the gospel in v. 7. Passive verbs dominate the digression, pointing to God's action in Paul's commission, specifically his calling him to this cosmic ministry, and revealing the mystery to him. It is not the activity of God in general, nor simply his initiative that is stressed here, but rather the activity of God *specifically in Paul's ministry* (cf. Caragounis 1977, 98). This provides further confirmation that Paul's imprisonment is no cause for alarm, nor is it an indication of divine disapproval of Paul or his ministry. Rather, God's working in power in the ministry of Paul continues despite his earthly circumstances.

That this commission was given to Paul ‘according to the exercise of [God’s] power’ (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ, v. 7b) is an especially significant claim, since the exertion of God’s power appears at key points in Ephesians. By the working of his power, God raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenlies (1:19-23). It is also by the working of the power of God that the church grows in the knowledge of the love of Christ (3:16-19, 20), and engages in conflict with the powers and authorities (6:10). The commission of Paul to his ministry by the exertion of the power of God has a similar cosmic significance.

Paul’s ministry, then, is unaffected by his circumstances. But the writer does not stop at merely describing the pivotal role Paul has been given in the cosmic purposes of God, nor does he downplay Paul’s unfortunate situation. Rather, the writer portrays Paul as exulting in his present occupation of a shameful, weak and humiliating position. Paul is depicted as glorying in his imprisonment, calling himself ‘Paul the prisoner’. Further, the writer presents him as claiming that it was specifically to him as the one who is ‘less than the least of all the saints’ (ἐμοὶ τῷ ἐλαχιστοτέρῳ πάντων ἁγίων) that this grace was given (v. 8a), stressing his own unworthiness and lack of fitness for the task. Paul is portrayed as stressing his utter weakness and inability so that the triumph of God in Christ might clearly be seen. If Paul was depicted as occupying a position of political strength or earthly power, the clarity of this display to the evil powers might, in some measure, be diminished. The writer, therefore, highlights Paul’s humiliation and weakness.

A similar rhetorical strategy is at work in several OT narratives in which Yahweh the Divine Warrior provides deliverance, and in which the human agent of his salvation is portrayed as completely lacking in credentials and fitness for the task. The narrative of David vs. Goliath in 1 Samuel 17 is an excellent example. In light of the overwhelmingly terrible threat that Israel faces in the ‘champion’ Goliath, the narrative stresses that what is needed is a ‘man’ powerful enough to fight him. The word ‘man’ appears 17 times in the narrative, but never with reference to David, who is, rather, a ‘son of Jesse’ (v. 12), a keeper of only a ‘few sheep’ (v. 28), an errand-boy, sent to bring supplies and food to his brothers—among the ‘men of Israel’ (v. 19)—at the battlefield, provisions that point to the

lowly stature of David's family.¹⁹ In the eyes of Saul and the 'men of Israel' David could not be more unqualified for the task at hand. This immense disparity between the need of the moment and the ability of David to meet it serves to cast the conflict in explicitly *theo*-logical terms (vv. 45-47), as a battle between the God of Israel and the gods of Philistia, so that the triumph clearly is that of 'Yahweh of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel' (v. 45), who delights to use utterly unqualified agents—in the eyes of the world—to accomplish his purposes.

The narrative of Gideon in Judges 6-7 is another example. Though the call of Gideon is composed in terms highly allusive to that of the call of Moses,²⁰ Gideon is anything but an example of Mosaic piety and faith in Yahweh, as the narrative focuses on how inadequate Gideon is to be the agent of Yahweh's deliverance.²¹ Especially prominent throughout the narrative are Gideon's paralyzing fear and lack of faith in Yahweh, as the rhythm of the story is continually disrupted by Gideon's hesitance to believe the signs of assurance provided by Yahweh. Not only this, but at Yahweh's greeting of Gideon at the outset of the story, Gideon fails to realize with whom he is speaking and responds with sarcasm instead of reverence, or, at least, caution.²²

Just as the lack of fitness for the task of the human protagonist in these OT narratives magnified the triumph of the Divine Warrior, the writer's imprisonment and portrayal of Paul as 'less than the least' of all the saints points to the greatness of the triumph of God in Christ, and shows the true character of Paul's situation as a prisoner. The digression amounts to an apocalyptic perspective of his ministry, locating it strategically within the cosmic conflict.²³

¹⁹ Krinetzki 1973, 211.

²⁰ Webb 1987, 148.

²¹ Exum 1990, 417.

²² Klein 1988, 53.

²³ Richard Bauckham's description of the Book of Revelation is particularly useful in articulating the function of the digression in giving a 'cosmic' interpretation of Paul's imprisonment: The writer gives an apocalyptic perspective on Paul's imprisonment in that the digression 'communicates a disclosure of a transcendent perspective on this world. It is prophetic in the way it addresses a concrete historical situation... and brings to its readers a prophetic word of God, enabling them to discern the divine purpose in [Paul's] situation and respond to [his] situation in a way appropriate to this purpose' (1993, 7). Reynier notes the presence of apocalyptic features in Eph 3:2-13 but claims that it has substantial differences from descriptions of the apocalyptic genre (1992, 27). 'Le vocabulaire est apocalyptique mais le genre ne l'est pas. La question qui se pose alors est celle de la fonction de ce vocabulaire car la présence du vocabulaire apocalyptique constitue une donnée essentielle pour saisir la problématique du texte' (1992, 28). While we agree with Reynier's assessment regarding the categorization of this text vis-à-vis the genre 'apocalyptic', we may say that the whole of Ephesians partakes of an apocalyptic worldview

The author continues to expound the paradox of Paul's ministry in two ways: He claims that Paul has been the recipient of divine revelation (vv. 3-7), and then elaborates on how Paul's proclamation of the gospel facilitates the vindication of the triumph of God over the powers (vv. 8-10).

Paul is the Recipient of Divine Revelation (3:3-7)

The first aspect of this cosmic commission is that Paul has been the recipient of divine revelation (vv. 3-7).²⁴ Whereas in the past God kept knowledge of the mystery hidden from humanity, he has now chosen to reveal it through a select group of people, one of whom is *Paul the prisoner*. The author claims first that the mystery was 'made known' (ἐγνωρίσθη) to Paul 'according to revelation' (κατὰ ἀποκάλυψιν).²⁵ Paul's grasp of the mystery should be evident from what he is portrayed as having written thus far (v. 3b),²⁶ and when the letter recipients hear it read, they will be able 'to understand' (νοῆσαι) Paul's

and that in Eph 3:2-13 the readers of this letter are given an apocalyptic vision of the imprisonment of Paul.

²⁴ That this is a distinct unit is indicated by the *inclusio* formed by the repetition of τῆς χάριτος τοῦ θεοῦ γῆς δοθείσης μοι in vv. 2 and 7 (Lindemann 1985, 57).

²⁵ While a number of commentators maintain that the revelation to Paul on the Damascus road is in view at this point (Gnilka 1971, 164; Schnackenburg 1991, 131; Kim 1981, 25; Sandnes 1991, 231; O'Brien 1999, 228-29), this need not be the case. It appears that the author is simply emphasizing the basis of Paul's knowledge of the mystery—that Paul has knowledge of it not on the basis of human study or intuition, but because of the revelation of God to him, regardless of whether this came during the Damascus Road revelation or over a succession of revelations (Best 1998, 299-300; Barth 1974, 330). Kim argues that the employment of a certain formula leads to the conclusion that the Damascus Road revelation is clearly in view. The formula χάρις + aorist passive form of δίδωμι + μοι, by which Paul speaks of God's call of apostleship to him, appears in Rom 12:3; 15:15; 1 Cor 3:10; Gal 2:9, as well as here in Eph 3:2, 7, 8. This call contains two elements; the revelation of the gospel, and the commission to proclaim it. For Kim, the former is found in Eph 3:3-6, and the latter in vv. 7ff. (1981, 22, 25). But in the passages cited by Kim, Paul speaks of the grace given to him in more general terms than the specific call of God to him on the Damascus Road. Moreover, it is not the case that in each of these instances—or in any of them, for that matter—both elements contained in the call are in view. Paul's ministry is in view in Eph 3:3, but it remains inconclusive whether or not he is referring to the revelation on the Damascus Road.

²⁶ Most commentators claim that this refers to what has been written thus far in the letter, though some stress certain passages over others (Schlier 1971, 149; Barth 1974, 329; Gnilka 1971, 164; Mußner 1982, 102; Reynier 1992, 168). Similar phrases are used in Heb 13:22 and 1 Pet 5:12 in reference to the letter in which they appear (Best 1998, 303). It is unlikely that this is a reference to other individual Pauline letters, or to a collection of them, since it would be inappropriate to refer to them as 'brief'. Further, this would assume that all the communities to which this letter was circulated had at least one copy of another Pauline letter, and that this letter would have been one in which the mystery was discussed in some manner, probably either Galatians or Colossians (Best 1998, 302). Goodspeed appealed to this cryptic clause in support of his reconstruction that Ephesians is the introduction to the collection of Paul's letters (1933, 41-42). Ultimately, no single interpretation of this clause is completely without problems, but it does seem most likely that it is a reference to earlier portions of the letter, most likely the author's discussion of chapter 2:11-22 (Reynier 1992, 168).

‘insight’ (σύνεσιν) into ‘the mystery of Christ’ (τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ). The writer had portrayed Paul as praying for their special insight (Eph 1:17-18), and thus far has been giving them a cosmic view of the lordship of Christ and of the situation of the church, pulling back the veil of visible reality and giving them a view of events from a perspective that includes heaven and earth. That Paul is the special agent of God in working out his purposes in this world ought to be clear from their reading (or hearing) the letter thus far.

In further support of his contention that Paul occupies an important position of cosmic significance, the author states that Paul is a member of the privileged group to which the revelation of the mystery was made known. Whereas formerly the knowledge of the mystery had been hidden (‘not made known’, οὐκ ἐγνωρίσθη) from all humankind (‘the sons of men’, τοῖς υἱοῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων), God has now chosen to reveal it ‘to his holy apostles and prophets’ (τοῖς ἁγίοις ἀποστόλοις αὐτοῦ καὶ προφήταις) (v. 5).²⁷

Some scholars assume that the main focus of the digression is the church and its relationship to the mystery,²⁸ but this makes little sense of the fact that the writer only briefly mentions the content of the mystery in v. 6. He simply states that Gentiles are now ‘fellow heirs’ (συγκληρονόμα), ‘fellow-members of the body’ (σύσσωμα), and ‘fellow sharers in the promise’ (συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας), and then moves on.

In vv. 3-7, then, the author gives his readers an accurate portrait of the strategic importance of Paul’s position as the recipient of revelation. Paul is not merely a prisoner of Rome suffering defeat at the hands of the powers ruling this present evil age. Rather, it is precisely in this humiliated state that he also has the privileged status as a recipient of divine revelation by the Spirit.

²⁷ The contrast here is absolute, rather than relative, so that the author regards the mystery as revealed for the first time through the apostles and prophets (Reynier 1992, 143-45; Bockmuehl 1990, 201; Schlier 1971, 150; Gnilka 1971, 167; Schnackenburg 1991, 133; Lincoln 1990, 177; Best 1998, 305-7; contra Caird 1976, 64; Caragounis 1977, 102-3; Saucy 1992, 147-51). The language in the passage implies an absolute comparison, especially with its emphasis on the ‘hiddenness’ on the one hand, and the ‘revelation’, or ‘making known’ of the mystery on the other. While the participation of Gentiles in the salvation of the end-time was envisioned in the OT, this specific new move of God in the church, in which Jews and Gentiles are on equal footing because of faith in Christ, was not foretold (Lincoln 1990, 177). As Bockmuehl notes, the point is not degrees of revelation, but the fact that what was previously unknown and beyond human knowledge, is now disclosed by God (1990, 201).

²⁸ E.g., Saucy, 1992, 128.

Paul is the Agent of Divine Triumph

In vv. 8b-12, the author discusses the actual task involved in the commission given to Paul by God. Not only is Paul in a privileged position because of his knowledge of the mystery of Christ, but the author goes on to make the extraordinary claim that Paul is the agent of divine triumph—the one through whom God accomplishes and vindicates his triumph over the powers ruling the present evil age. In vv. 8b-9 Paul is portrayed as claiming that his proclamation is the means God uses to call the church into existence, and in vv. 10-12, that this is then the means by which God’s triumph is vindicated before the powers.

Paul’s Preaching is the Means of the Creation of the Church

The author begins to delineate what is involved with Paul’s commission (αὕτη χάρις, ‘this grace’) in v. 8b, by stating that Paul is ‘to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν εὐαγγελίσασθαι τὸ ἀνεξιχνίαστον πλοῦτος τοῦ Χριστοῦ)’. This is followed by a second infinitive in v. 9, φωτίσαι, connected by καί, so that in addition to being called to preach, Paul is further commissioned ‘to enlighten everyone what is the administration of the mystery’ (καὶ φωτίσαι πάντας τίς ἡ οἰκονομία τοῦ μυστηρίου). Most scholars agree that the two infinitives (εὐαγγελίσασθαι and φωτίσαι) are not set in synonymous parallelism (i.e., describing only one task with two expressions), but that in some way φωτίσαι in v. 9 elaborates or builds upon εὐαγγελίσασθαι in v. 8b.²⁹ But this further elaboration is left unexplored, so that it is largely regarded as in some way filling out the picture of how the mystery is made known, perhaps involving a further impartation of information.

There is good reason, however, to see the following dynamic at work in the author’s argument. The second infinitive is built upon the first so that it is the result of the activity of the first. In other words, the proclamation of Paul in v. 8b (εὐαγγελίσασθαι) is the means by which the church is called into existence, and it is this emergence of the church through the preaching of Paul the prisoner that is in view in v. 9a when the author writes of ‘enlightening all/everyone (πάντας) what is the administration of the mystery’. Paul is seen as claiming, therefore, that the cosmically wide-ranging enlightenment regarding the mystery is *an actual*

²⁹ Schlier 1971, 152; Caragounis 1977, 106-7; O’Brien 1999, 243; Jeal 2000, 171.

demonstration of it, rather than having to do with Paul’s speaking of its content. It is by actually *seeing the church in existence* that ‘everyone’—*primarily the cosmic powers*—is made to be enlightened as to the manner in which God is working out his plan of salvation.³⁰ The enlightenment spoken of here, then, is not *informational*; it is *demonstrative*.

This reading makes good sense of the final phrase of v. 9, describing God as the one who ‘creates all things’ (τῷ τὰ πάντα κτίσαντι)—a direct reference to the creation spoken of in this very verse. God is the one who, in the beginning, called all things into being, and again he creates out of nothing, calling the church into being through the proclamation of Paul.³¹ This is consistent with the new creation language used with reference to the church throughout Ephesians (2:10, 15; 4:24), and with biblical polemical passages that speak of creative power as one of the key distinguishing features of the true God over against all other entities regarded as deities.³² This same polemical edge is present here: In the face of the powers and authorities who are powerless to create, and whose rule over this present evil age is characterized by destruction, division and leading humanity astray into idolatry, God’s power is demonstrated by his ability to create the ‘New Humanity’ (Eph 4:24), and to set it in the midst of enemy territory, thus confounding the evil powers.

This also explains the appearance of the church in v. 10. There is a sense of movement from v. 8b to v. 10 where the church emerges into view—from the starting point of the preaching of Paul to the Gentiles in v. 8b to the appearance of the church in v. 10. But at what point does the church come into view? My

³⁰ The πάντα in v. 9, along with the prominent role the powers and authorities play in this passage, indicates that this enlightenment primarily has these cosmic figures in view. See the discussion on v. 10 below. The πάντα in v. 9 is most likely original, but its inclusion or exclusion has little effect on the argument presented here. If it is excluded, the sense is that Paul’s commission is to ‘bring to light what is the administration of the mystery’, instead of him ‘enlightening all’ as to its content.

³¹ ‘Gott, in dem die Einheit von Schöpfung und Erlösung feststeht, vermag, weil er der Schöpfer ist, sein Erlösungswerk sicher durchzuführen’ (Gnilka 1971, 173).

³² Several passages reflect this polemical strategy whereby the creative power of Yahweh, the living God, is set against the gods of other nations, who not only cannot create, but are regarded as non-existent. ‘For all the gods of the peoples are idols (עֲלֵלִים, ‘worthless things, vanity’), but Yahweh *made* (עָשָׂה) the heavens’ (Ps 96:5). In Acts 14, the crowds regard Paul and Barnabas as gods and attempt to offer to them sacrifices. The apostles’ response reflects this OT tradition: They ‘tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things (ματαιῶν) to a *living God, who made* (ἐποίησεν) the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them”’ (Acts 14:14-15).

contention that the church is called into existence by means of the preaching of Paul accounts for this progression. As Paul the prisoner preaches the riches of Christ, God calls the church into existence, and this process facilitates the display of God's wisdom in v. 10.

The 'enlightenment' in v. 9, then, does not refer to Paul's ministry of proclamation directly, as if his explanation of the content of the mystery helps people to understand it more clearly. Rather, the church's very coming-into-existence is in view, so that the entire cosmos is enlightened as to the administration of the mystery through the object lesson of the church's coming-into-being.

Paul's Preaching is the Means of God's Vindication before the Powers

Not only is Paul's preaching the means by which God calls the church into being, but the church's coming-into-existence in this manner serves to display the variegated wisdom of God to the rebellious powers.³³ The ἵνα at the beginning of v. 10 is connected to the infinitive clause in v. 9b so that Paul brings to light the administration of the mystery 'in order that (ἵνα) the variegated wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies through the church (διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας)'.

The triumph of God in Christ takes place in two ways in this passage. First, the powers are made to know the wisdom of God 'through the church' (διὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, v. 10). The author is not here charging the church with the task of preaching to the powers, as Walter Wink argues,³⁴ but claiming that the manner in which God has made known his multi-faceted and many-splendored wisdom to the evil powers is by confounding them and their rule over this age in his creation of the church. The powers have ordered the present evil age in such a way as to exacerbate the divisions within humanity created by the Law (2:11-12). God

³³ Some commentators have appealed to passages such as 1 Pet 1:12 and Mark 13:32 arguing that angels who are faithful to God need to be informed about the mystery and can learn more about the ways of God from observing his saving purposes (Mußner 1982, 105; Bruce 1984, 321). But in Ephesians, the powers in the heavenlies are consistently portrayed as evil and the argument of the letter has to do with the subjection of these hostile powers to the exalted Christ. This passage reflects that viewpoint in noting the manner in which God triumphs over the powers—by overcoming their dominance of the present evil age to create within this fallen creation ruled by the powers the New Humanity, the existence of which serves notice to the powers of their subjection to the Lord Christ.

³⁴ Wink 1984, 89-96. The proclamation spoken of in v. 8 has the Gentiles in view and nowhere is the church given the commission to preach to the powers.

confounds the powers, however, by creating in Christ one unified, multi-racial body consisting of formerly divided groups of people. And it is the existence of the church as such a body set within the hostile environment of the present evil age that proclaims to them the wisdom of God.³⁵

But the mere existence of the church set within ‘enemy territory’ is not all that is in view here. The author is also stressing *the manner* in which the church comes into being. The means of the creation of the church by God—‘the God who creates all things’—is *the proclamation of Paul the prisoner*, the one who is less than the least of all the saints. In his depicted situation, Paul is in a position of utter defeat at the hands of the powers, being completely in their grasp. Seen in terms of the present age, he could not be in a weaker, more shameful or more vulnerable position. Yet, astonishingly, it is by his preaching of the gospel that the creative power of God is unleashed and engaged, and the church—the arena of the triumph of God—is called into being, thereby displaying the wisdom of God to the powers.

This paradoxical dynamic at work in v. 10 is the same as that in 1 Corinthians, where God ‘destroys the wisdom of the wise’ by choosing the foolish and the weak to shame the wise and the strong (1 Cor 1:19-27). The author portrays Paul as living out this paradox so that he is seen as following the pattern of humiliation and exaltation set by his Lord, whereby in his shameful death—by being utterly defeated—Christ triumphed over the evil powers (Eph 2:13-16; 4:8-10; Phil 2:8-11; Col 2:15).

This paradoxical situation magnifying the triumph of God in Christ is still in view in v. 12, where the author teases out the irony. He mentions the blessings of ‘boldness’ or ‘freedom of speech’ (παρρησίαν) and ‘access in confidence’ (προσαγωγήν ἐν πεποιθήσει)—while Paul is in prison, a position in which he would likely enjoy little or no freedom or confident access to anything or anyone of consequence. Those who find themselves ‘in Christ’, however, enjoy the privilege of boldness to approach the throne of the sovereign God of the universe,

³⁵ ‘La constitution de l’Homme nouveau, créé avec le Juif et le Grec, l’esclave et le citoyen, l’homme et la femme, chef-d’œuvre de la Sagesse divine. L’église est explicitation du mystère’ (Bouttier 1991, 148).

and of such access they may have full confidence, because of the faithfulness of Christ (‘through his faithfulness’, διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ).³⁶

Concluding Exhortation (3:13)

Based on the author’s reinterpretation of Paul’s imprisonment and how it serves to magnify the power and triumph of God over the powers and authorities, the writer portrays Paul as urging his readers in v. 13 to not lose heart (ἐγκακεῖν) upon hearing about his imprisonment and afflictions (θλίψεσιν). They have reason to rejoice, since such afflictions, far from being a source of defeat or discouragement, are working to bring about his readers’ eschatological glory (ἥτις ἐστὶν δόξα ὑμῶν, ‘which are your glory’). The logic here is quite similar to that in Philippians 1, where Paul claims that, just as God exalted Jesus based on his submission to a humiliating death, his imprisonment is working for his own salvation (v. 19), and that the suffering that his readers endure is a sign of their salvation and of eschatological judgment for those who persecute them (v. 28). Both contexts justify Paul’s imprisonment, explaining that his being in prison does nothing to hinder the cause of the gospel nor does it signal some sort of defeat for

³⁶ This genitive construction typically has been read as either a subjective (‘his [Christ’s] faithfulness’) or objective (‘faith in him’) genitive. Lincoln, Bouttier, and Hoehner prefer the latter, but give little justification for their position (Lincoln 1990, 190; Bouttier 1991, 149; Hoehner 2002, 466-67). A subjective genitive rendering fits this context well as it focuses on the faithfulness of Jesus to the will of God as the means by which the blessings given to believers are secured. Wallis notes that constructions with διὰ and a reference to Christ in the genitive are similarly used elsewhere in Ephesians (1:5, 7; 2:16; 2:18) (1995, 131; cf. also O’Brien 1999, 250; Foster 2002, 84-89; Wallace 1996, 115-16). While Foster also advocates a subjective genitive reading, many of his arguments simply are unbelievable. For example, he claims that while the author of Ephesians does not refer specifically to the obedience of Christ, ‘he does speak of those who follow the opposite path as τοῖς υἱοῖς τῆς ἀπειθείας’ in Eph 2:1 (2002, 86). But nowhere in Ephesians are the actions of Christ compared to those of the ‘sons of disobedience’. Further, he claims that the faithfulness/obedience of Christ is in view in 3:12 because of the occurrence in v. 8 of the phrase ‘the riches of Christ’. According to Foster, these riches are the wealth bestowed on Christ by God in reward for his faithfulness in enduring death, a connection that he maintains because of the close proximity of ‘riches’ to the notion of the sacrificial death of Christ in 1:7. But such a connection is at least highly unlikely, if not completely improbable. ‘Riches’ in Ephesians do not refer to the wealth given to Christ by God, as this is surely not the subject of Paul’s preaching to the Gentiles in v. 8. While one might agree with Foster that there are ‘undercurrents of ideas’ referring to the faithfulness of Jesus which stand behind the phrase διὰ τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ in 3:12, it is extremely unlikely that the connections suggested by Foster reflect such ideas.

Seifrid interprets πίστις Χριστοῦ and the related phrase here as a ‘qualifying’ genitive, but his explanation of what this means is unclear. He attempts a withering critique of the subjective genitive reading from a theological perspective, but fails to grapple with it seriously and wildly misses his mark (2000, 139-46). For a concise and helpful review of the debate between subjective and objective genitive readings of πίστις Χριστοῦ, as well as a discussion of the ‘faithfulness of Christ’ tradition in the NT, especially Romans and Galatians, see Longenecker 1998, 95-103.

the purposes of God. This is the same conclusion reached in Eph 3:13: the readers of Ephesians have no reason to despair at Paul's sufferings and his present situation, since it is his paradoxical ministry to the Gentiles—the workings of which he has outlined in full—that facilitates their eschatological glory.

The digression in Eph 3:2-13, therefore, is not pointless, nor is it merely an explanation of the origin and nature of Paul's apostleship. Rather, it plays a strategic role in the unfolding argument of Ephesians, in that it explains for the readers of Ephesians how Paul's imprisonment, which appears to contradict the triumph of God in Christ, is actually an epitome—a concrete manifestation—of that triumph.

The Triumph of God in Paul's Prayer for the Church

After the digression concludes, prayer report resumes, repeating τοῦτου χάριν from 3:1 in v. 14. The author depicts Paul as praying that his readers will be empowered by God so that they might be enabled to actualize their identity as he has described it in Eph 2:19-22. The writer had detailed there how God had created out of the divisions within humanity one New Humanity and that this was a testament to his triumph over the powers ruling the present age. Now he turns to represent Paul as praying that God will strengthen them to meet the challenge of realizing all that they are meant to be as the dwelling place of God on earth.³⁷

The prayer addresses God as 'the Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named' (τὸν πατέρα, ἐξ οὗ πάντα πατριά ἐν οὐρανοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς ὀνομάζεται), stressing God's universal sovereign authority. God is the πατέρα ('Father') who names every πατριά in heaven and on earth. Much effort has gone into identifying the precise referent of the term πατριά, but Jeal may be right in claiming that the attempt to nail down a specific definition for this

³⁷ Arnold claims that the main thrust of the prayer concerns their experience and knowledge of the power of God. On his view, the prayer contains two requests: First, Paul prays for the strengthening of believers by the Holy Spirit through the indwelling Christ (vv. 16-17), and secondly, for 'a personal knowledge of both the power and love of Christ' (vv. 18-19a). The final request in v. 19b summarizes the first two requests (1989, 86-87). He misconstrues the structure of the prayer report, however, in an attempt to confirm his broader thesis regarding the purpose of the letter. While Paul is seen as praying for his readers' strengthening and empowerment, this is not an end in itself. He prays this in order that they might have the capacity to gain an intimate knowledge of the love of Christ in order that they might then be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were made the temple of God by the Spirit—that they might live out their design as the fullness of God. Arnold is wrong, then, to claim that the 'heart of the request is that the readers would be strengthened with power', for this truncates the prayer (1989, 87).

term misses the more important point of the intended effect and function of the phrase. The author's thrust here is that every grouping in any sense in heaven and on earth is under the sovereign lordship of God, since God is the one who creates and names them. While the families in the heavens may not be another specific designation for the evil powers, they certainly are in view at this point. It is an encouragement in praying to the Father for the author to remind his readers that the one to whom Paul prays is the one who exercises dominion over the evil powers who rule the present fallen age, as well as over all humanity on earth.

The prayer consists of a succession of requests, each building on the previous one, working up to a crescendo with the ultimate petition in v. 19—that the readers would effectively fulfill God's intention for them to be the fullness of God. The initial request is found in v. 16, where Paul prays that God might grant to his readers 'to be strengthened with power through his Spirit' (δυνάμει κραταιωθῆναι διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ) 'in the inner man' (εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον).³⁸

The second request is found in v. 17a, and this builds on the initial request so that the infinitive κατοικῆσαι indicates the purpose of the strengthening spoken of in v. 16.³⁹ The prayer is that God would strengthen his people with power by his Spirit 'so that Christ might dwell in your hearts by faith' (κατοικῆσαι τὸν Χριστὸν διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν).⁴⁰

³⁸ This phrase indicates the entire human being, though viewed from one aspect—that aspect on which the Spirit acts (Best 1998, 341; cf. also Bouttier 1991, 157-58; Betz 2000, 315-41). Contra Schlier, who claims that this refers to the New Humanity of 4:24 (1971, 169).

³⁹ Bouttier 1991, 158.

⁴⁰ A majority of commentators reads κατοικῆσαι in parallel with κραταιωθῆναι in v. 16, so that both are dependent on ἵνα δῶ and the second specifies what is meant by the first (Abbott 1897, 96; Westcott 1906, 51; Schlier 1971, 169; Gnllka 1971, 184; Barth 1974, 369-70; Lincoln 1990, 197; Schnackenburg 1991, 149; Best 1998, 341; Fee 1994, 696; O'Brien 1999, 258; Perkins 2000, 11:414; Jeal 2000, 118-19). According to this reading the strengthening by the Spirit in v. 16 is the same as the indwelling of Christ in v. 17 (O'Brien 1999, 258). Further parallels exist between the two verses, as they both have a διὰ phrase, along with two phrases denoting sphere (εἰς τὸν ἔσω ἄνθρωπον, v. 16; ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν, v. 17a) (Best 1998, 341). According to Fee, 'this is what it means for them to be strengthened by the Spirit in the inner person, namely, that Christ himself thus dwells in their hearts; all of this transpires by faith' (1994, 696). These two verses do not make a good parallel, however. In v. 16 τοῦ πνεύματος is the agent of the strengthening by God whereas in v. 17 τὸν Χριστὸν is the one who is to dwell in the hearts of the readers. If there is any parallel, τοῦ πνεύματος is in parallel with τῆς πίστεως in v. 17a, since they are both the agents of the activities spoken of, and τὸν Χριστὸν is parallel with God in v. 16 since he is the one who is in view regarding the activity of the passive infinitive κραταιωθῆναι. The only remaining parallel is between the two phrases indicating sphere. While certainly there is a connection between the dwelling of Christ with the church and this occurring 'by the Spirit', as is noted elsewhere in the letter, this phenomenon does not demand that these two

The dwelling of Christ in the hearts of the readers which is in view has to do with the abiding presence of Christ with his people, the unity of Christ with the church, his body.⁴¹ Paul is depicted as praying that Christ would indeed abide with his people in a powerful way and that this requires not only the strengthening by the Spirit, but also the activity of the church in being faithful to what God has designed the church to be.⁴²

In this penultimate request, the author presents Paul as praying paradoxically that his readers, ‘being rooted and grounded in love’ (ἐν ἀγάπῃ ῥριζωμένοι καὶ τεθεμελιωμένοι, v. 17b), would be able to come to a greater knowledge of the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ. Paul prays that as a community (σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις, ‘together with all the saints’) they would be able to comprehend the vast dimensions of the love of God. This love is first referred to by a series of dimensions (τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος, ‘the breadth and length and height and depth’), stressing the overwhelming nature of the love of Christ which the author wishes to impress upon his readers.⁴³

requests be read in strict parallel as this view maintains. It is preferable to view the request in v. 17a as building upon that in v. 16 (Bouttier 1991, 158; Hoehner 2002, 481).

⁴¹ Faith is spoken of here as the means by which Christ dwells in the readers’ hearts. For Hoehner, this indwelling of Christ is an individual phenomenon as opposed to the corporate indwelling in 2:21-22 (2002, 482; cf. also Fee 1994, 696). But this can easily be pressed too far. While the author certainly does not speak of a corporate heart here in which Christ might dwell, the context has in view the corporate church so that this indwelling of Christ is not merely an individual phenomenon. The dynamic of the work of God for which the author portrays Paul as praying is to be experienced by communities together, and not on any individual level apart from the community. Not only is the basis of this prayer the dwelling of God with his people by the Spirit in 2:19-22, but in the very next verse, the love of Christ is to be experienced ‘together with all the saints’ (σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις, v. 18) (Bouttier 1991, 158).

⁴² Wallis claims that the faithfulness of Christ is in view here, but it is more likely that that this has to do with the active participation of the community of believers in faith/faithfulness to God (cf. 1995, 132).

⁴³ These dimensions have been the cause of no small debate. Arnold has argued for reading these dimensions as a rhetorical expression of the vastness of the power of God (1989, 95). He notes that these dimensions are cited in several magical texts and in the same order as here (1989, 91-92). He cites *PGM* IV.964-74, found in Betz 1992:

Give your strength, rouse your daimon, / enter into this fire, fill it with a divine spirit, and show me your might. Let there be opened for me the house of the all-powerful god ALBALAL, who is in this light. Let there be light, breadth, depth, length, height, brightness [καὶ γενέσθω φῶς, πλάτος, βάθος, μῆκος, ὕψος, ἀύγή], and let him who is inside shine through, the lord BOUËL.

He also cites *PGM* IV.979-85:

I conjure you, holy light, holy brightness, breadth, depth, length, height [πλάτος, βάθος, μῆκος, ὕψος], brightness, by the holy names / which I have spoken and am now going to speak. By ΙΑΘ̄ ΣΑΒΑΘ̄Η ΑΡΒΑΘΙΑΘ̄ ΣΕΣΕΝΓΕΝΒΑΡΦΑΡΑΓΓΕΣ

This is further heightened by his paradoxical prayer that they would be able ‘to know’ (γινῶναι) the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (τὴν ὑπερβάλλουσαν τῆς γνώσεως).⁴⁴

The climax of the prayer is now reached, the ultimate and final request. Paul is portrayed as praying that God would grant all his previous petitions so that the church might effectively realize its identity as the temple of God in Christ, the place where God’s fullness dwells on earth (ἵνα πληρωθῇτε εἰς πᾶν τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ, v. 19b). Just as the reality of the church being the dwelling place of God is explicated in 1:23 and 2:19-22, so here the need of the church to realize this goal, by the power of God, is evident.⁴⁵

The Triumph of God in Paul’s Doxology

The author follows Paul’s prayer and essentially closes off the first major section of this letter with a doxology in vv. 20-21. The doxology is closely

ABLANATHANALBA AKRAMMACHAMARI AI AI IAO AX AX INAX remain by me in the present hour, until I pray to the god / and learn about the things I desire.

Arnold argues that these dimensions appear to be related to divine power in some sense and if the readers of Ephesians had come from a background in which they had engaged extensively in magical practices, this reference to the four dimensions would have a significant resonance with them. There are significant problems, however, with Arnold’s thesis. First, the texts cited by Arnold are quite late—from the fourth century—making it highly unlikely that the readers of Ephesians would have been aware of such parallels. He argues, however, that the readers would indeed have been aware of such magical traditions, but this insistence undermines his thesis in the end. While it is difficult to determine just what the dimensions in the texts that he cites are referring to, they most likely name hypostases. But if Arnold is correct that the readers of Ephesians were aware of these magical traditions, then why is there no explicit identification of power as the object of the dimensions, since this would have been a dramatic change from the use of the dimensions with which the readers would have been aware? On Arnold’s view, the readers of Ephesians would interpret the prayer as a request for their intimate knowledge of the hypostases, not the power of God (Lincoln 1990, 209). Lastly, it must be noted that Arnold is not exactly correct in arguing that the dimensions in the magical texts are good parallels. Though they do appear in the same order as in Ephesians, they appear in a sequence of other items, whereas the four in Eph 3:18 appear on their own. A number of other scholars maintain that these dimensions refer to the manifold wisdom of God, which is spoken of in 3:10 (Barth 1974, 396-97; Bruce 1984, 327-28; Dahl 1975, 74-75). The dimensions are found in Job 11:5-9 where God’s ways are described as being beyond human comprehension; they are as high as the heavens, deeper than Sheol and broader than the sea (vv. 8-9; cf. also Sir 1:1-8). Yet, as O’Brien notes, there simply is no reference here to the wisdom of God (1999, 263). It is most reasonable to view the object of the dimensions as the love of Christ, because of the coordination of this verse and v. 18 (Gnilka 1971, 186-89; Caird 1976, 70; Mitton 1976, 134; Caragounis 1977, 75; van Roon 1974, 265-66; Mußner 1982, 111-12; Best 1998, 346; Muddiman 2001, 173; Bouttier 1991, 161; Lincoln 1990, 212-13; contra Van Kooten 2003, 179). The infinitives (καταλαβέσθαι . . . γινῶναι) are parallel so that there is a movement in the direction of love as the object of the dimensions, but the naming of that love is drawn out and delayed until v. 19. The two verses are coordinated by the conjunction τέ (‘even’), which implies a closer connection than καί, so that it is read as follows: ‘in order that you might be able to grasp . . . even to know . . .’ (Best 1998, 346).

⁴⁴ Bouttier 1991, 162.

⁴⁵ Gombis 2002, 262.

connected with the prayer and is integrally linked with the argument of the letter to this point. The theme of power is prominent, as God is addressed as the one ‘who is able to do infinitely more than we might ask or think’ (δυναμένῳ ὑπὲρ πάντα ποιῆσαι ὑπερεκπερισσοῦ ὧν αἰτούμεθα ἢ νοοῦμεν).⁴⁶ This ascription of God may have to do with the bold and seemingly impossible request just offered by Paul in the previous few verses. The process of the people of God coming to know the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ seems to be one which has no end, but the author’s confidence is that God is the one who is ‘powerful’ (δυναμένῳ) enough ‘to accomplish’ (ποιῆσαι) such a task.⁴⁷ After all, he has just related that God was able ‘to accomplish’ (ἐποίησεν, v. 11) in Christ what he had planned from all eternity.

The power of God is further highlighted by the phrase which explains the standard according to which God’s power to accomplish his goals is measured—‘in accordance with the power which works in us’ (κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν). References to the exercise of God’s power occur at key points in the argument of the epistle. In 1:19-23, God exerts his power in raising Christ from the dead and seating him in the seat of cosmic Lordship over all his enemies. This exaltation is then vindicated as God in Christ triumphs over the powers of this age and creates one New Humanity of formerly divided peoples. This same power is exerted in Paul’s cosmically pivotal ministry (3:7), as God calls the church into being through the proclamation of one in the weak and shameful position of being a prisoner. Now in v. 20 the author claims that this same power is at work in the church. It is by an exertion of the power of God that the New Humanity has come into being and God’s power continues to sustain and empower this new creation.

The writer now ascribes glory (δόξα) to God both through the church (ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ) and Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). This is the only doxology in the NT that contains such unique wording, ascribing glory to God ‘in the church’. O’Brien claims that this reference may be explained on the basis of the church’s being the collection of those who have been redeemed by the grace of God.⁴⁸ Yet such a generalized reference does not rightly capture the strategic

⁴⁶ Arnold 1989, 100-2; Best 1998, 349.

⁴⁷ Fee 1994, 697; O’Brien 1999, 267.

⁴⁸ O’Brien 1999, 268.

relationship of this note in the doxology to the argument of the letter. The triumph of God in Christ is demonstrated by the creation of the church as the one New Humanity and its witness to the evil powers regarding that triumph. The doxology calls forth the attribution of glory to God for his triumph in the church, for in it he has confounded the powers and magnified his supremacy in overcoming their dominance of the present evil age. The remainder of the epistle will build on this foundation as the church is urged to realize their identity as the New Humanity by the power of God in order to glorify God.

The glory of God 'in Christ Jesus' is closely related to this, of course. The church is the body of Christ and it is by the exertion of the power of God in Christ that God has triumphed over the evil powers. The end of Ephesians 3 is also a transition point as the first three chapters focus on the glory of God in Christ, and the second three focus on the glory of God in the church.

Conclusion

The digression in Eph 3, then, arises from the need to clarify the nature of Paul's situation vis-à-vis his imprisonment. To view him merely as a prisoner, as one who has been defeated by the powers ruling the present evil age, is to misunderstand his position on a cosmic scale. It is in this position of shame and dishonor that he has the cosmically significant role of being the administrator of the grace of God and the facilitator of the demonstration of the triumph of God to the powers. On this reading, Eph 3 is most certainly not pointless but integrally relates to the argument of the epistle, being driven by a concern to help Paul's readers understand how his imprisonment is consistent with God's triumph in Christ.

CHAPTER 6

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST AND THE EMPOWERING OF THE CHURCH

Introduction

This passage has been read by a number of scholars as highlighting the importance of the unity produced by the Spirit.¹ This seems easily justified since the unity of the ‘body of Christ’ appears at key points throughout 4:1-16. In v. 3, the author urges his readers zealously to ‘maintain the unity of the Spirit’ (τηρεῖν τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος), and in vv. 5-6, a series of unifying items inherent in the Christian faith are laid out in order to stress the unity of the church, one of which is the ‘one Spirit’ (ἐν πνεύμα). Further, one of the goals that the gifting of the church by the exalted Christ is meant to achieve is the attainment by the church of the ‘unity of the faith’ (τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως, v. 13). Along this line of interpretation, the present passage stresses the fact that, though there is genuine diversity within the church, this diversity serves to foster the unity created by the Spirit.² This is based on reading the present passage through the lens of two other Pauline discussions of ‘spiritual gifts’ (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31).³ Both of these—especially 1 Cor 12:4-31—have to do with the relationship of gifts given to individuals and the manner in which this ought to enhance the unity of the body of Christ. There are also elements in Eph 4:1-16 that reflect such a discussion, such as Christ giving to ‘each one of us’ χάρις according to the ‘measure of the gift of Christ’ (κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Following the citation of the Scriptural warrant for this gift by Christ, the author goes on to list several gifts given (v. 12) in order to foster the attainment, by the church, of the ‘unity of the faith and the knowledge of the son of God’ (v. 13).

While issues regarding unity obviously are important in this passage, I will argue that unity is not the controlling factor in Eph 4:1-16. The dangers that are listed in the latter part of this text (vv. 14-16) are not simply those that militate against unity, but rather work to harm the body in its growth into the head. Deceptive teachers and their doctrine most certainly have an affect on the unity of

¹ Mayer 2002, 134; MacDonald 2000, 297; Caird 1976, 71.

² Schnackenburg 1991, 175; Penna 1988, 176-77, 185; Robinson 1904, 179.

³ Gesse 1997, 187.

the people of God, but this is only one aspect of the discussion in this passage, not the whole. Further, while the church has been blessed with gifts by the exalted Christ in order to grow in unity, several other aspects of growth are in view, such as growth in maturity and in the knowledge of the son of God (vv. 13-16). Finally, unity is not an end in itself in the letter, but rather is only one of the elements—albeit one that is vital—that points to the larger notion of the triumph of God. That is, one of the main aspects of the triumph of God is that in a fractured cosmos, God’s bringing about unity is seen as an act of victory over the powers that are working to divide humanity and to foster the destruction and disintegration of relationships.⁴

I will argue in this chapter that Eph 4:1-16 has to do with the manner in which the exalted Lord Christ equips his people to participate with him in his triumph over the powers, and it establishes that the church is the arena in which the triumph of God in Christ is vindicated. The lordship of Christ over the powers is demonstrated by the growth in maturity of the church—the extent to which new creation life flourishes in the New Humanity.⁵ Several strategic elements in Ephesians 1-3, along with several textual factors in the present passage, support this reading.

As I argued in the previous chapter, Paul’s status as a prisoner serves to magnify the triumph of God in Christ because the power of God can be seen clearly in the life of someone who is in such a lowly place, but who, at the same time, occupies such a cosmically significant position. The writer then portrays him as praying that God would so empower his readers that they would be filled up to all the fullness of God—that is, that they would exhibit their unity with God and manifestly embody the life of God on earth, actualizing their status as the one unified people of God. In his doxology that closes the chapter, the author then calls for the praise of God, and specifically names him as the one who is able to do all that the author has asked—in fact, is able to do it with even greater results

⁴ According to Muddiman it might be too much to say that there really is anything like an argument present. He claims that the passage ‘lacks a close-knit structure’ and that it is ‘highly compressed and allusive, as though the author could, given a more suitable occasion, say much more than he has allowed himself to do here’ (2001, 188).

⁵ This passage, therefore, plays a vital role within the argument of the letter. It does not serve merely as a rhetorical bridge from the ‘doctrinal’ to the ‘ethical’ section, as some claim, nor can the passage be taken out of the letter without essential loss to the argument, as some commentators indicate (contra Bruce 1984, 354; Barth 1974, 499).

than anyone can anticipate—and that he can do this ‘by the power that works within us’ (κατὰ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἐνεργουμένην ἐν ἡμῖν, 3:20). Finally, he issues a plea that God be glorified, not only in Christ, but also ‘in the church’ (ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, v. 21).

Two features of this passage are important for our purposes. First, that the growth of the church is accomplished by ‘the power that works within us’ (3:20) is highly significant in that the working of the power of God is an element that appears at key points in the letter’s argument. In 1:19b, it was the exercise of the power of God (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ, ‘according to the exertion of the strength of his power’) that raised Christ from the dead and exalted him ‘far above’ the powers and authorities. In 3:7 the writer claims that the cosmically significant ministry of Paul—whereby his proclamation facilitated the vindication of the triumph of God in Christ to the cosmic powers—was given to him ‘according to the working of his power’ (κατὰ τὴν ἐνέργειαν τῆς δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ). The letter also closes with the exhortation to be strong in the Lord and ‘in the strength of his power’ (ἐν τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ) (6:10).

The occurrence of this phrase at the close of the doxology is significant for the development of the argument in Eph 4:1-16. It indicates that the existence of the church is to be seen in continuity with the exercise of God’s power in raising Christ and giving Paul his cosmically significant ministry. Further, the church is to operate according to the same dynamic—it has its existence, and it continues to function, by the exertion of the power of God.⁶ Not only this, but it operates according to the same dynamic of humiliation and exaltation exhibited in the death and resurrection of Christ, and in the ministry of Paul. Finally, the unique plea that glory is to be given to God ‘in the church’ (3:21) points to the notion that the triumph of God in Christ is to be epitomized in the life of the church just as it was in the life and ministry of Paul.

A second important feature that determines the manner in which this passage is to be read is the role that the church plays on the cosmic plane in Eph

⁶ ‘Der Zusatz κατ’ ἐνέργειαν zeigt, daß dieses Wachstum aus göttlicher Kraft geschieht. Wie aus den übrigen Stellen des Briefes hervorgeht, ist mit ἐνέργεια immer die Kraft Gottes angesprochen, die zur Durchführung der endzeitlichen Heilsverwirklichung wirksam ist’ (Gese 1997, 188).

3:10. The author explains that the church—along with its coming-into-existence by his preaching—is to be the means by which the powers and authorities come to know the variegated wisdom of God. That is, the church is the arena in which the triumph of God in Christ over the rebellious powers is vindicated. This second feature will be especially important in identifying the content of ‘the calling’ (τῆς κλήσεως) of the church in Eph 4:1. These textual factors that are at work leading up to Ephesians 4 set the stage for the development, in 4:1-16, of the manner in which the exalted Christ equips his people to embody his triumph in the life of the church.

This passage appears to mark the shift from the portion of the letter focused on identity formation (Ephesians 1-3) to that emphasizing the task(s) of the people of God (Ephesians 4-6). It begins with παρακαλῶ οὖν ὑμᾶς (‘I urge you, therefore’), which clearly indicates that the writer is now moving to give exhortation based on his foregoing material.⁷ He then calls his readers to imitate the pattern that he has set out, embracing a position of shame while exulting in the cosmic purpose to which God has appointed him. In the same way, his readers are to live in accordance with their calling, and to do this with lowliness and humility, bearing with each other in love. But then the writer takes a turn and the thrust of the passage is no longer ‘task-oriented’. He takes this course because there is one last element that has not yet been factored into the scenario of divine warfare. That is, the final portion of a typical divine warfare cycle, after the triumphant deity ascends his throne and takes his seat, is that the deity then blesses his people in one way or another. This is what Eph 4:7-16 portrays, the ascension of Christ and his blessing of the church. The manner in which this fits into the argument of the letter is as follows: This gifting of the church is the manner in which Christ provides for the church to participate with him in his triumph over the powers. That is, as the church embodies new creation life—which will be outlined in the following chapter on Eph 4:17-6:9—the exaltation of Christ ‘far above’ the powers will be made manifest, since such community transformation will demonstrate that Christ has far greater power than the powers and authorities, being able to create a new people who, though they inhabit the fallen creation,

⁷ Best 1998, 359-60. Jeal, however, argues that the ethical section does not necessarily follow upon the doctrinal framework of the letter. Not only does the *exhortatio* contain arguments that have no direct basis in the ‘statement of facts’ (*narratio*), but Eph 1-3 contains notions ‘that are in apparent contradiction to the moral exhortations of chapters 4-6’ (2000, 177-78).

nonetheless are empowered to live the new creation ethic. In the same way, then, that the life and ministry of Paul pointed to the triumph of God over the powers, so the life of the church does the same, and the present passage discusses how Christ empowers the church to play this role.

The Commission of the Church to be the Arena of the Triumph of God over the Powers

The calling of the church is to embody and vindicate the triumph of God in Christ over the powers and authorities. Just as the writer had woven the tale of Paul's life and ministry as a narrative in which the triumph of God in Christ is made manifest, so he now exhorts his readers to embody the triumph of God in Christ in their community life as the church.

As stated above, Eph 4:1 seems to initiate the 'task-oriented' section of the letter, and it is significant that Paul is depicted as addressing these matters as 'the prisoner of the Lord' (ὁ δέσμιος ἐν κυρίῳ). This is not a reminder of how much the hearers of this letter owe to the ministry of Paul, or a subtle plea for financial help.⁸ Rather, the writer holds up before his readers the paradoxical nature of their shared existence; just as Paul's position of shame and humiliation makes manifest the triumph of God in Christ, so too they are to follow his example and see to it that they actualize the triumph of God in Christ in their life together as the community of God's people. This cryptic reference, then, is the means whereby the author holds before his readers the paradox of a glorious calling and a shameful present existence. The writer presents Paul's own life is an *instance* of the triumph of God and his readers must replicate this pattern in their community life.

This is what is meant by the command to the readers to 'walk worthy of your calling' (περιπατῆσαι τῆς κλήσεως ἧς ἐκλήθητε, v. 1b), which must be read in light of the theme of the triumph of God in Christ over the powers that runs throughout the letter. The calling of the church is to be the arena in which

⁸ Contra Cassidy, who claims that there is nothing that is lost if the author does not make this reference to Paul as a prisoner. For Cassidy, this is merely a pragmatic move on the author's part in an effort to appeal to his readers to receive his exhortation to longsuffering with one another and to humility (2001, 98).

this triumph is made manifest.⁹ The author has stated in Eph 3:10 that it is through the church that the powers are made to know the variegated wisdom of God and this relates to the triumph of God over them in breaking creation and humanity free from their grip. This reference in 3:10 looks back to 2:19b-22, where the church is the temple of God in Christ by the Spirit, constructed by the victorious Divine Warrior as a monument to his defeat of the powers. This, then, is the ‘calling’ of the church.¹⁰

The manner in which the recipients of Ephesians are to fulfill this calling—and in which they are to imitate the example of Paul—is drawn out in vv. 2-6. In v. 2 they are told to ‘walk’ (περιπατῆσαι, v. 1) ‘with all servility’ (μετὰ πάσης ταπεινοφροσύνης) and with ‘meekness’ (πραΰτητος). The imitation of the humiliation of Paul according to the standards of this age is evident with the term ταπεινοφροσύνης, which would not have been a virtue in contemporary Greco-Roman ethical thought, but rather a demeaning trait.¹¹ Only in early Christianity did this term come to be viewed in a positive light, as an imitation of the life of Jesus (Mt 11:29; Phil 2:8; 1 Pet 5:5).

This manner of life is in direct contrast to that of this present age, where, according to Ephesians, the opposite is the norm. The writer claims that this present evil age is characterized by fighting for one’s own rights and by self-seeking gain to please oneself, regardless of the consequences for others (4:19; 5:5). Just as Paul was in a position that was characterized by shame and humiliation by the standards of this present age, so too the author now recommends that his readers adopt such a position toward one another, in direct opposition to the manner in which the powers have ordered this world, so that the

⁹ This mitigates the force of Jeal’s argument that the doctrine elaborated in Eph 1-3 does not directly support the ethical exhortations in Eph 4-6. He argues that while Eph 2:11-22 and 3:2-13 provide fairly clear precedent for the discussion of unity in 4:1-3, ‘the appeal for behaviour that is worthy of the calling of God (4:1) and will preserve the “unity of the Spirit” (4:3) is not directly supported by chapters 1-3’. He claims that the theological motivation for the exhortation in 4:1-3 occurs in 4:4-6 (2000, 179). If a satisfying case can be made for understanding τῆς κλήσεως as flowing directly from the development of the role of the church in chapters 1-3, then Jeal’s contention loses its force.

¹⁰ That Ephesians has traditionally been read as a Pauline meditation on the blessings of salvation in general terms may be the reason for the assumption that the ‘calling’ of the church is simply a ‘call to salvation’. But such a view misses the strategic role of the church, as elaborated above, and is content with reading Ephesians through the lens of a very generalized notion of Pauline theology (cf. Bruce 1984, 334; O’Brien 1999, 275; Hoehner 2002, 504).

¹¹ According to Aristotle, ταπεινοφροσύνης had overtones of servility, small-mindedness and meanness (*Rhet.* 1384a4) and Epictetus places it at the head of a list of qualities that are not to be commended (*Diss.* 3.24.56) (Muddiman 2001, 179; MacDonald 2000, 286).

triumph of God might be clearly seen in their community. In adopting such a stance in community relationships, the readers of Ephesians would be imitating the humiliation of Paul and the self-giving example of Jesus (Eph 5:25).

The writer exhorts his readers also to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (v. 3). The unification of humanity is the hallmark of the triumph of God and one way the church participates in this triumph is zealously to protect (σπουδάζοντες τηρεῖν, ‘being eager to maintain’) this unity which has been created by God.¹² This is done when relationships within the church are strengthened and held together by the bonds of peace.¹³

This is backed up by a rehearsal of unifying factors in the Christian faith. Seven such factors are listed by the author, though it does not appear that he merely lists these items as if he were quoting a creedal formula verbatim, placing equal emphasis upon each one.¹⁴ Rather, the list in vv. 4-6 may be read in such a way that the first two elements are highlighted as emphatic assertions, with the remaining five items listed as corroborating evidence. In other words, the exhortations in vv. 1-3 are reinforced with the emphatic claim that there is indeed only the one body of Christ and one Spirit, just as there are other unifying elements that Christians share in common.¹⁵ That the creedal formula as it appears here may be read this way is indicated by the καθὼς (‘just as’) that is placed after πνεῦμα, with the repetition of the word ‘one’ before each item providing the rhetorical device whereby the unity of the body by the Spirit is driven home.¹⁶ Further, if the writer is indeed citing a modified creedal formula here, it is unlikely that such a formula would have begun with σῶμα and πνεῦμα,

¹² The phrase τὴν ἐνότητα τοῦ πνεύματος points to the unity that is created, effected and preserved by the Spirit (Caird 1976, 72; Best 1998, 365; Wallace 1996, 105; Schnackenburg 1991, 164).

¹³ Hoehner regards the initial dative in the expression ἐν τῷ συνδέσμῳ τῆς εἰρήνης as a dative of sphere so that it refers to ‘the place in which the unity of the Spirit is to be preserved and manifested, namely, in the bond of peace’ (2002, 512). But the expression is better viewed in an instrumental sense so that the unity is maintained by means of peaceful relationships—it is peace that ties believers together (Hanson 1946, 149; Schlier 1971, 184-85; Fee 1994, 701).

¹⁴ It appears quite obvious that the author is in some way taking up a traditional creedal formula in vv. 4-6 (Barth 1974, 429, 462-72), though its original form and the writer’s modification of it remain completely speculative (Caird 1976, 72). The existence of a creedal formula lying behind this text and its form cannot be determined with any amount of certainty. While it seems likely that the author is indeed working with a pre-existing formula in some form, what is important for our present purposes is its appearance in this context, since ‘the present formulation can be easily shown to make good sense in the present context and was therefore “created” for such purposes’ (Fee 1994, 702).

¹⁵ Cf. Schnackenburg 1991, 160; Hanson 1946, 151.

¹⁶ Best 1998, 366.

but rather with designations for God, such as κύριος or πατήρ, which appear later in this list, or, as Fee suggests, the Father, Son and Spirit.¹⁷ The writer begins with σῶμα and πνεῦμα because in this immediate context he is stressing the unity of the ‘one body’ and its being created by means of the ‘one Spirit’.¹⁸

Finally, that the remaining five elements are listed as a sort of argument emphasizing the importance of the first two is indicated by his addressing the readers in the second person (ἐκλήθητε) and by breaking up the rhythm of the formula in v. 4b. Instead of merely listing the third element—‘one body, one spirit, *one hope*’—it appears that there is the assumption—or a resumption—of an argument after the first two elements. He is telling his readers that the unity of the body and the Spirit is built upon the fact that they were also ‘called in one hope of their calling’.¹⁹

The church, then, is the locus of the vindication of the triumph of God in Christ, and its calling is to manifest this triumph in its community life.

The Provision of Christ, the Triumphant Divine Warrior

The author now turns to discuss how Christ has made provision for the church to carry out its commission to be the arena in which his exaltation over the powers is vindicated. He speaks of the ‘gift of Christ’ (τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ, v. 7b), and to elaborate on this notion, he writes about the exaltation of Christ over all things and of the descent and ascent of Christ to his cosmic throne, quoting Ps 68:18 for scriptural support. While there are a number of thorny interpretive problems in Ephesians, there is perhaps none more difficult than untangling the complex web of issues surrounding Eph 4:7-11. After surveying the proposals for solving the complex problem of the quotation of Ps 68:18 in Eph 4:8, O’Brien states that ‘None of the above-mentioned suggestions fully solves this difficult crux’.²⁰ As will be shown, viewing the argument in Ephesians as animated by the pattern of divine warfare offers a solution to this difficult interpretive problem that avoids the pitfalls of other explanations.

¹⁷ Fee 1994, 702.

¹⁸ Fee 1994, 703.

¹⁹ Fee 1994, 703.

²⁰ O’Brien 1999, 293.

The writer begins his discussion in v. 7 by stating that ‘to each one of us, grace (χάρις) has been given according to the gift of Christ’. This χάρις consists of the gifted leaders that the exalted Lord Christ has given to the church.²¹

Having stated that this χάρις has been given ‘according to the measure of the gift of Christ’ (κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ), the author gives scriptural warrant for this claim by quoting from Ps 68:18 (MT 68:19; LXX 67:19), and then appropriating the imagery of the psalm to speak of the descent and ascent of Christ (v. 8-11). There are a number of difficulties that surround this passage, having to do with the two main elements of vv. 8-11. First, the quotation from Psalm 68 has one significant difference from both the MT and the LXX texts, namely, the appearance of ἔδωκεν (‘he gave’) in place of קָבַץ לָאֱלֹהִים (‘he received’). What is the cause of this change and what use does the author make of the imagery in Psalm 68? Second, there is no agreement on what the author means by speaking of the descent and ascent of Christ, and what relationship this elaboration has to the quotation from Psalm 68. The following discussion will focus on these two main issues.

One attempt to solve the difficult problem of the use of Psalm 68 is that of G. Smith, who argues that the psalm originally had to do with ‘the movement and presence of God in past and present history which is revealed in acts of mercy (68:19-20, 28), judgment (68:21), and particularly the theophany (68:1, 8, 68-18, 35)’.²² Though the psalm contains military imagery, it is merely metaphorical and ‘should not be taken too literally’. What is central to the psalm is ‘the entrance of

²¹ Some scholars regard the phrase, ‘to each one of us’ (ἐνὶ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν) as pointing to the ministers that are spoken of in v. 11, so that the ‘grace’ (χάρις) consists of various forms of leadership given to individuals who will be apostles, prophets, etc. (Schlier 1971, 191; Mußner 1982, 122). According to Mußner, this is ‘die “Gnadengabe,” die einem jeden Amtsträger in der Kirche von Christus gegeben wird, in Bezug zum “Maß des Geschenkes Christi”’ (1982, 122). This is based on the close connection of v. 7 with v. 11. But there is a difference between v. 7 and v. 11 that cannot be ignored. That is, in v. 7 the recipients of the χάρις are ‘each one of us’, and in v. 11 the leaders that are named are *themselves* the gifts that are given to the church (Lincoln 1990, 241). Therefore, the phrase ‘to each one of us’ must be more comprehensive than merely the leaders mentioned in v. 11, referring to the church as a whole, including the author and his readers (O’Brien 1999, 287; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 175-76; Best 1998, 376-77). Further, the χάρις here does not refer to the ‘particular enablement given to each believer to empower them for ministry’ (Hoehner 2002, 522; cf. also Schnackenburg 1991, 175-76; MacDonald 2000, 289). Such a view is based on reading Ephesians 4 illegitimately in terms of other Pauline discussions of ‘spiritual gifts’ (Rom 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4). While there are superficial similarities between this passage and these other Pauline contexts, Ephesians displays a different line of argument, discussing the gift that these leaders constitute for the church and her commission rather than the relationship between the diversity of gifts and the unity of the body of Christ (Overfield 1976, 118; Gosnell 2000, 136).

²² Smith 1975, 186.

God into his sanctuary in Zion’ and if one were to read it as a ‘hymn of praise concerning a military victory’ one would miss the psalm’s central point.²³ Smith goes on to note that the gifts that are received in v. 18 make it ‘possible for God to remain in His sanctuary among His rebellious people’, and he identifies these captives as the Levites who will make atonement for the Israelites so that Yahweh might continue to dwell among them. He makes this connection based on the notion that the Levites were taken from among the sons of Israel (Num 8:6), and that they were separated from Israelites (Num 8:14) for Yahweh’s special possession (8:4-5, 14).²⁴ He sees Numbers 8 as a sort of commentary on Psalm 68, where Yahweh receives gifts ‘from among men’—referring to the Levites taken from among the Israelites—and claims that the writer sees this connection and then utilizes it in making the application to the manner in which Christ gives gifts to the church in Eph 4:8.²⁵

Smith’s proposal, while certainly interesting, is hardly convincing. His contention that the military imagery in Psalm 68 is irrelevant to the basic thrust of the psalm misses the integral relationship between assertions of the kingship of Yahweh and the vindication of that claim with a listing of Yahweh’s (often military) triumphs. Smith’s attempt to separate the husk of the military imagery from the kernel of the actual meaning of the psalm is a distinction that simply cannot be maintained. Further, there is no connection between the gifts that Yahweh receives from humanity (Ps 68:18) and the Levites being taken from among the sons of Israel (Num 8:6). This receiving of gifts in Ps 68:18 more likely has to do with the giving of gifts to Yahweh as he ascends his throne, or may even have reference to the conquered peoples reluctantly bringing gifts of tribute to Yahweh. It would be difficult to imagine anything further from view in Psalm 68 than the Levites! While the Levites serving the people of God might have made an attractive parallel to the gifted church leaders in Ephesians 4, Smith’s proposal is completely without basis.²⁶

Another proposal is that of T. Moritz, who claims that the appropriation of Psalm 68 is a polemical move by the author directed against Jewish uses of the

²³ Smith 1975, 185.

²⁴ Smith 1975, 186.

²⁵ Smith 1975, 189.

²⁶ O’Brien regards Smith’s proposal somewhat sympathetically, but reserves judgment as to whether there is any connection between Psalm 68 and Numbers 8, and whether the imagery of the Levites being taken by Yahweh lies behind the quotation in Ephesians 4 (1999, 293).

psalm that speak of the giving of Torah by God through Moses.²⁷ Moritz argues that the psalm was used at Jewish Pentecost celebrations to celebrate the gift of Torah and that there had developed in early Christianity a corresponding tradition in which the psalm was used to speak of God giving his gift *par excellence*—Christ.²⁸ The writer of Ephesians utilizes this tradition so that the citation of Ps 68:18 is not so much an exposition of the psalm with Christ-centered elaboration, but rather a ‘parody’ on rabbinic uses of it.²⁹

Moritz’s proposal fails to be compelling, however, since Ephesians lacks any hint of an anti-Mosaic polemic. Certainly in Eph 2:11-16 there is reference to Christ defeating the enmity that existed between Jews and Gentiles because of the Mosaic Law, but this does not develop into an anti-Torah polemic in Ephesians to any noticeable degree. If anything, it is at precisely this point that the letter begins to reflect an appreciation for the ethical resources to be mined in the OT.³⁰ Further, Moritz maintains that the contrast between Jewish and Christian uses of Psalm 68 is at the point of the content of the gift of God: the Jewish uses of the psalm allegedly stress that God’s gift is Torah, while the Christian tradition stressed the gift of God as Christ.³¹ But in Eph 4:7 it is most likely Christ who is giving χάρις, and in v. 11, it is Christ again who is giving the gifted leaders to the church, so the contrast between the two gifts of God breaks down. Lastly, Moritz’s case is built on the speculation that there was a Christian tradition reaching back to the first century that set a precedent for the use of Psalm 68 in the manner quoted in Eph 4:8. But this is based solely on the reading in *Targum* Psalms, which substitutes the verb ‘gave’ for ‘receive’, and which most likely dates later than the middle of the fifth century CE.³²

Another proposal that has gained acceptance among several major scholars on Ephesians, and that W. H. Harris has recently defended at length in a recent monograph, is the view that this passage has to do with the ascent of Christ in his resurrection and subsequent descent to earth *as the Spirit* in order to fill the church

²⁷ Moritz 1996, 71-85; cf. also Bouttier 1991, 182-84; Penna 1988, 187-88.

²⁸ Moritz 1996, 74.

²⁹ Moritz 1996, 72.

³⁰ Cf. the uses of OT texts in 4:25; 5:31; 6:2, 3.

³¹ Moritz 1996, 74.

³² Moritz 1996, 60.

and empower it with spiritual gifts.³³ Those who argue along this line claim, much like Moritz, that the change in the citation of Psalm 68 from ‘received’ to ‘gave’ comes from a Christian tradition, perhaps even a first century text that the author of Ephesians adopted for his own use.³⁴ This was most likely a tradition that expressed the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost through the imagery of Psalm 68, as is evident in Acts 2:32-33.³⁵

In support of the contention that the descent of Christ is subsequent to his ascent, Harris argues that the writer shapes the *midrash* in vv. 9-10 to correspond to the movement of Moses in *Targum* Psalms 68, which has Moses first going up to receive the law from God and then descending down the mountain to give the law to the people.³⁶ Harris also attempts to draw connections between Psalm 68 and Jewish Pentecost celebrations, and between Psalm 68 and the giving of the Spirit in Acts, in an effort to establish that the author of Ephesians is reflecting an early Christian tradition that associated Pentecost, Psalm 68 and the giving of the Spirit.³⁷ He then offers the suggestion that the use of the ascent/descent imagery in Ephesians 4 serves as an anti-Moses polemic, and he draws the comparison a bit tighter than did Moritz, so that the contrast is between Moses ascending Sinai and descending with the Torah, and Christ who ascended in victory and descended—as the Spirit—and gave gifts to the church.³⁸

On this view, then, there is an identification of Christ and the Spirit, since it is Christ who descends as the Spirit. Harris claims that in several other places in the Pauline epistles, there is a virtual identification between Christ and the Spirit, pointing to the same passages upon which Caird built his case.³⁹ Harris argues that this same dynamic occurs in Ephesians. He claims that an inseparable relationship is indicated by the author’s noting that the sealing of the Spirit in 1:13 takes place ‘in Christ’.⁴⁰ This connection is strengthened in the prayer in 3:14-21,

³³ Harris 1994, 198-214; 1996; Caird 1964; 1976, 73-75; Lincoln 1982, 18-24; 1990, 246-47; Mouton 2002, 92-94.

³⁴ Caird 1964, 541. Cf. also Taylor 1991, 329-35.

³⁵ Harris 1996, 159-69.

³⁶ Harris 1996, 143; Caird 1964, 540-42. *Targum* Psalms 68:19 reads, ‘You ascended to heaven, Prophet Moses ([משה נביא]); you led captive captivity ([שבייה]); you learned the words of Torah ([אוריהא]); you gave them as gifts to the sons of men ([יהבתה להון מתנן לבני נשא]).

³⁷ Harris 1996, 143-70.

³⁸ Harris 1994, 212; 1996, 160.

³⁹ Rom 8:9-10; 2 Cor 3:17; 1 Cor 15:45 (Harris 1996, 182-89; Caird 1964, 537).

⁴⁰ Harris 1996, 190.

where the result of the author's request that his readers be strengthened with power by the Spirit (v. 16b) is that Christ is made to dwell in their hearts (v. 17a).⁴¹ Harris also implies that such a connection may be made in Eph 5:18, building on Barth's suggestion that the phrase ἐν πνεύματι might correspond to the ἐν Χριστῷ formula that dominates the first three chapters.⁴²

Lincoln, Caird, and Harris also claim that this view is validated by the location to which Christ, as the Spirit, descended. The phrase τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς is read as a genitive of apposition so that Christ is seen as having descended to the earth itself ('the lower parts, that is, the earth').⁴³ Harris bases this claim on the 'surprisingly large number of appositive genitive constructions, distributed throughout the epistle', and he cites 14 possible examples.⁴⁴

Finally, making use of a rhetorical argument throughout his monograph, Harris states in a number of places that only on this reading can the elaboration of the writer upon Ps 68:19 be anything other than completely irrelevant to the flow of the argument. He claims that if the writer is merely stating that after his ascension Christ gave gifts to the church, then the *midrash* in vv. 9-10 is unnecessary, because the dispersal of gifts is made plain in the psalm quotation. The elaboration in vv. 9-10, on such a view, does 'nothing whatsoever to advance the argument concerning the distribution of spiritual gifts', but rather adds 'an apparently superfluous note which gives the impression of theological pedantry'.⁴⁵

While this proposal has a number of respected proponents and has been argued at length in several places, it fails for a number of reasons. First, the several connections that Harris, following Caird, attempts to make between Psalm 68 and Pentecost, and between Psalm 68 and the giving of the Spirit in Acts, are

⁴¹ Harris 1996, 191.

⁴² Harris 1996, 192; cf. Barth 1974, 582.

⁴³ Caird 1976, 75; Harris 1994, 204. A majority of commentators reads the phrase this way, though certainly as part of different interpretations (cf. Bouttier 1991, 183; Lindemann 1975, 219-21; 1985, 77; Cambier 1963, 267-71; Schnackenburg 1991, 178-79). According to Bouttier, the phrase 'est un génitive dit épexégétique (explicatif)' indicating 'les régions inférieures que constitue la terre'. He claims that 'Le comparative ne joue pas par rapport au mot *terre*, mais par rapport à la *hauteur*' (1991, 183).

⁴⁴ Harris cites the following: εἰς ἀπολύτωση τῆς περιποιήσεως (1:14), τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ (2:12), τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ (2:14), τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν (2:15), τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν (2:20), τὴν δωρεὰν τῆς χάριτος τοῦ διδασκαλίας (4:14), τὸν θώρακα τῆς δικαιοσύνης (6:14), ἐν ἐτοιμασίᾳ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου τῆς εἰρήνης (6:15), τὸν θυρεὸν τῆς πίστεως (6:16), τὴν περικεφαλαίαν τοῦ σωτηρίου (6:17), τὴν μάχαιραν τοῦ πνεύματος (6:17), and τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου (6:19) (1994, 204).

⁴⁵ Harris 1996, 177.

unconvincing. There is simply no textual evidence of the usage of Psalm 68 in Acts 2, which may account for the highly tentative manner in which Harris states his conclusion: ‘On the whole... it seems quite probable that an allusion to Ps 68:19 was present in the underlying tradition used by Luke in Acts 2’.⁴⁶ If it were the case that this line of argumentation by Harris was brought in as corroborating evidence of a far stronger case made on other bases, or if this were an element in the picture that could be explained by the case made on other grounds, this would not be a major objection. But it is because these connections are a main pillar in Harris’ argument that their weakness is so devastating. Harris admits that much of his proposal is based on probability, but the multiplying of possibilities makes one’s case far weaker, not stronger.

Second, as was mentioned in connection with the critique of Moritz above, there is no hint of an anti-Moses polemic in Ephesians, nor of an attempt to understand the movements of Christ in light of Moses.⁴⁷ Harris claims, in distinction from Moritz, that the contrast drawn by the author of Ephesians is between the ascension of Moses to receive the law and his descent to give it to the people, and the ascension of Christ to heaven and his descent, as the Spirit, to give spiritual gifts to the church. But the giving of gifts by Christ is not set in opposition to the giving of the law by Moses, nor is the reception of the law in view in Ephesians at all. Further, it is illegitimate to bring into Ephesians any notion of a law/grace contrast, as Harris attempts to do.⁴⁸

Third, the attempt to identify Christ with the Spirit in Ephesians runs into insuperable problems. It is certainly true that the activities of God, Christ, and the Spirit are closely related in Ephesians, but there are no grounds for *identifying* Christ and the Spirit in Eph 4:8-11. Though the functions of Christ and the Spirit are related in the texts cited by Harris and Caird, they are not identical. The role

⁴⁶ Harris 1996, 169.

⁴⁷ As I will attempt to demonstrate below, and as Yoder Neufeld recognizes, ‘In Ephesians, the identification of Christ is not with Moses . . . but with the victorious God of Psalm 68’ (2002, 177).

⁴⁸ ‘It is even possible that ὁ ἁγίους in Ephesians 4:7 is intended to convey a subtle contrast: Moses brought down the Law from Sinai to give to men, but to each believer, Christ brought down not law but grace’ (Harris 1994, 212). It is inappropriate to adduce certain elements in Eph 2 in order to draw such a law/grace contrast in Ephesians, such as the polemic against boasting (vv. 8-10) or the destruction of the Mosaic law in the death of Christ. These issues are unrelated to matters involving discussions of the Mosaic law in Romans and Galatians, where one might more plausibly draw such a contrast, though in light of recent work on these letters, one might have little ground for so doing.

of the Spirit in Ephesians is mainly to mediate the work and presence of Christ, along with the power of God, to the church.⁴⁹ Further, there is no identification of Christ and the Spirit in Eph 1:13, where the readers are ‘sealed’ by the Spirit in Christ. There is indeed an identification in Ephesians of Christ and his body, the church, and this identification is made possible by the Spirit, so that it is in this sense that they are seen as working together.⁵⁰ The same can be said for the other passages cited by Harris, Caird and Lincoln. The Spirit and Christ are depicted as working closely together in Ephesians, but this does not point toward an identification of the two.

That Christ himself remains in view throughout the entire discussion, vis-à-vis the Spirit, is indicated by the presence of the personal pronoun αὐτός, which serves to emphasize that it is precisely the one who descended who also ascended, that is, Christ, not the Spirit.⁵¹ Though the Spirit is mentioned in connection with major features of unity for the church in 4:4, and the readers are instructed to ‘maintain the unity of the Spirit’ in v. 3, the Spirit is not in view in vv. 7-16. The focus here is on the ascended Christ and his giving gifts to the church, not on the relationship of ‘spiritual gifts’ to the Holy Spirit. This view depends on the assumption that the readers would make an implicit connection between the descent of Christ and the giving of the Spirit by Christ to the church, since this connection is nowhere in the present text, nor anywhere else in Ephesians. That is, it is clear that Christ descends in this passage, but there is no mention of the giving of the Spirit to the church. According to Harris, the readers would have already known that it was at Pentecost that the Spirit was given to the church and they would have read the descent of Christ to ‘the lower parts of the earth’ in terms of the giving of the Spirit to the church. Harris’ speculation at this point, however, is dependent on other speculative features of his proposal, making this highly unlikely.

This also highlights the illegitimacy of supporting this reading of Ephesians with the Acts passages that, Harris alleges, appropriate imagery from Psalm 68 (Acts 2:33; 5:31).⁵² In Acts 2:33, the ascended Christ receives what was

⁴⁹ Gombis 2002, 259-71.

⁵⁰ On the use of the ‘body’ language in Ephesians to speak of the unity of Christ and the church, see Dawes 1998, 172.

⁵¹ Fee 1994, 699.

⁵² Harris 1996, 159-69.

promised from the Father and then pours out the Spirit on the apostles. The pattern in this text, then, is that Christ has ascended to heaven and pours out the Spirit, in contrast to the scenario of Harris, where Christ ascends, and then descends *as* the Spirit. In fact, it might actually hurt Harris' case if the connection with Acts is successful, because it would undercut his claim that the movement of Christ in the tradition based on Psalm 68 is ascent/descent, instead of descent/ascent—as it is in the Acts passage. The same pattern is evident in Acts 5:31-32, where it is Christ who has been exalted by God and it is the Spirit 'whom God has given to those who obey him' (v. 32). Here, again, Christ ascends after his descent and gives the Spirit; an ascent follows a descent, not the reverse. The evidence from Acts, then, seems to stress that it is not Christ who descends subsequent to his ascent, but rather that Christ ascends and gives the Spirit to the church.⁵³

In a related point, the focus of the text in Ephesians 4 is that Christ presently occupies the position of supreme Lord over the cosmos, and this is the exalted place from which he gives χάρις to his people. It goes against the flow of the context—and this will be made clear in light of the following proposal—to have Christ descending back to earth, even as the Spirit, after he has ascended to his exalted position as cosmic Lord.⁵⁴

Lastly, given the cosmic situation of the church throughout Ephesians—i.e., its existence 'in the heavenlies'—and the various images utilized to speak of the church, it is extremely odd that the writer would designate the descent of Christ in the person of the Spirit *to the church* as descending τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς ('to the lower parts, that is, the earth'). While I intend to make the point in this thesis that the manner in which the church engages in a struggle against the cosmic powers is by earthly and mundane obedience and the fostering of self-giving relationships, the church is not depicted as merely an earthly people, but rather as a player on a cosmic level, where it is blessed and seated 'in the heavenlies' with Christ. One would have expected some other manner of speech if the writer had a descent to the church in mind. In Eph 1:22, the author states plainly that Christ has been given, as head over all things, 'to the church'. In 5:25-33, Christ and the church are depicted as being joined inseparably through

⁵³ Muddiman 2001, 195.

⁵⁴ Barth 1974, 433; Turner 1994, 1237.

the imagery of marriage. The author betrays no reticence in speaking plainly about the unity of Christ and the church and that this is actualized by the Spirit, who mediates the presence of Christ and the power of God to his people. Thus it would be highly exceptional for the writer to designate the church with the euphemism ‘the lower parts, that is, the earth’.⁵⁵

In the end, much of this view is based on speculation and its strength or weakness depends on how well it accounts for all the data in the text. What ultimately undermines this view is that many of the pillars upon which it is constructed are faulty to the point where it is impossible to affirm it. If another proposal can adequately account for the data with fewer problems and less speculation, than that view ought to be accepted as valid.

I contend that the imagery of divine warfare present in this context indicates that the ideology of divine warfare, and the pattern utilized in its expressions, provides the key to understanding the writer’s aim in appropriating Psalm 68 to speak of the giving of χάρις to the church.⁵⁶ The author depicts Christ as the triumphant divine warrior who, after he has ascended his throne, blesses his people with gifts. The subsequent elaboration in vv. 9-10 draws this out and confirms that this is the manner in which the Psalm 68 quotation is being used.

The center around which the entire discussion in vv. 7-10 turns is the matter of the giving of gifts to the church by Christ. This is evident from the piling up of words for ‘gave’ or ‘gift’ and the *inclusio* formed by the appearance of such words in vv. 7 and 11. In v. 7, the writer claims that ‘to each one of us, χάρις was given (ἐδόθη) according to the gift (δωρεάς) of Christ’. The main verb in the quotation from Ps 68:18, the OT text at the core of this passage, is ἔδωκεν, pointing to the giving of gifts to men by the exalted Yahweh. Then, in the verse that rejoins the main discussion, in v. 11, the author returns to the main discussion by claiming that ‘he gave (ἔδωκεν)’ gifted leaders to the church. The writer’s burden in the initial assertion (v. 7), the quotation of Ps 68:18 (v. 8), and

⁵⁵ If the author had a descent to the earth in view, Mußner states that ‘hätte er einfach schreiben können: “hinabgestiegen auf die Erde”’ (1982, 123).

⁵⁶ Several scholars have noted the imagery of triumph present here (Yoder Neufeld 2002, 177; Fee 1994, 706; Schnackenburg 1991, 177), but none has drawn on the ideology of divine warfare to explain the author’s use of Ps 68.

the ensuing exposition (vv. 9-10), is to explain how it can be said that Christ has given χάρις to the church.

As mentioned above, the quotation of Ps 68:18 (MT 68:19; LXX 67:19) is problematic because of the replacement of ‘gave’ (ἔδωκεν) for ‘received’ (ἔλαβε; ἔλαβε; ἔλαβε), so that the citation in Eph 4:8 reads: ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἡχμαλώτευσεν ἀρχιμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (‘having ascended on high, he led captive a host of captives, he gave gifts to men’). As noted above, this problem has thus far proven intractable.

One step towards a solution is to recall the pattern of divine warfare, and the elements in the cycle that are found in Ephesians 1:20-2:22: Lordship (1:20-23), conflict-victory (2:1-16), victory shout (2:17), celebration (2:18), and house-building (2:20-22). While Ephesians 1:20-2:22 contains the basic elements of the mythological pattern, texts wherein this configuration is found often contain several other elements, such as an extended development of the threatening situation, theophany, the restoration of fertility, or the blessing of the people. These last two elements are closely related in that they are two recurring blessings that the exalted deity confers upon his people or upon creation. That is, the sequence in this mythology usually closes—after the deity has processed to and assumed his throne—with the deity restoring the fertility of the created order and blessing his people with peace or salvation in some form.⁵⁷ For example, in *Enuma elish*, after he defeats Tiamat in battle, Marduk claims his throne as supreme among the gods, restores fertility, and blesses his people with protection and refuge (Tablets VI, 71-VII, 144).⁵⁸ Similarly, in Psalm 29, after Yahweh asserts his superiority over the forces of chaos and demonstrates his cosmic kingship, he gives strength to his people, blessing them with peace (v. 11). The same feature is found in Isa 43:16-21, where the imagery of the triumph of Yahweh over the machinery of war, along with the sea and mighty waters (vv. 16, 17), is followed by Yahweh blessing the people with fruitfulness in a dry place (v. 20).

Psalm 68, which is quoted in Eph 4:8, celebrates Yahweh as the conquering divine warrior, and utilizes the pattern of divine warfare to portray him

⁵⁷ Millar 1976, 80-81; Cross 1973, 162-63; Yarbrow Collins 1976, 208.

⁵⁸ See Speiser 1969, 60-72.

as such.⁵⁹ Significantly for our purposes, it contains this element of blessing after victory and enthronement, as it depicts Yahweh conquering his enemies and then blessing his people with gifts. In the psalm, Yahweh processes to his throne after a military victory, and on the way he receives tribute from his people (v. 18), familiar imagery in the ANE. Upon his ascension to his throne, Yahweh then turns and gives gifts to his people: In v. 35, Yahweh is praised for the awesome power he projects from his heavenly throne, from which ‘the God of Israel himself gives strength (עֹז) and power (חֵסֶד) to the people’ (v. 35b).

In our view, the imagery of Yahweh ascending to his heavenly throne from which he blesses his people is what the author aims to capture in the quotation in Eph 4:8. He is not simply quoting *one verse*—Ps 68:19 in abstraction from the remainder of the psalm—but rather appropriating the narrative movement of the entire psalm. In this manner, the author portrays Christ as the victorious divine warrior who has the right to give gifts to his people because of his triumphs. Reading Ephesians through the lens of the ideology of divine warfare provides a satisfying solution to this difficult and hitherto intractable problem of the appropriation of Psalm 68 to speak of Christ giving gifts to the church.

One might object that the pattern of divine warfare is inappropriately applied to this text because of the great distance between the main features of the pattern in 1:20-2:22 and the appearance of the blessing of the people in 4:8. But, as we demonstrated in chapter 4 of this thesis, much of Ephesians 3 is a digression from the main outline of the letter’s argument, so that the beginning of Ephesians 4 continues directly from 2:22. And the digression does not obscure from view the theme of divine triumph, but is directly related to it, in that the author is heading off a potential objection to his claim that Christ has been exalted as Cosmic Lord.

This proposal makes sense of the enigmatic phrase ‘he led captive a host of captives’ (ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν) in v. 8. The writer leaves this phrase undeveloped in his elaboration on the quotation, but it is likely an allusion to the defeat of the powers and authorities by the victorious Divine Warrior, Christ.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Hanson 1979, 306. See the analysis of this psalm and its composition according to the pattern of divine warfare in Chapter 2.

⁶⁰ Mußner 1955, 44; Arnold 1989, 56-57; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 176; Mouton 2002, 91. Yoder Neufeld leaves open the possibility that the phrase could point to Christ’s having taken ‘captivity’ itself captive, a reference to the freeing of humanity from the grip of the powers and

This would confirm that the imagery of divine warfare is prominent in this passage, and that it rightly serves as an interpretive lens for understanding the quotation and elaboration, in contradistinction to the proposals of Harris and Moritz, who claim that this text contains an anti-Mosaic or anti-Torah polemic. The gifting of the church by Christ is not portrayed in either of these ways, but rather is based on his triumphs over his enemies, who, in Ephesians, are the powers and authorities.⁶¹

While this explains the change in the quotation from ‘received’ in Psalm 68, to ‘gave’ in Eph 4:8, we must now discuss how this fits with the elaboration of the quotation in vv. 9-11. In v. 9, the author draws out what he means by quoting from Ps 68:18 by asking τὸ δὲ ἀνέβη τί ἐστὶν (‘now this “he ascended”, what is it?’).⁶² He claims that it can only⁶³ indicate that there is also a descent to ‘the lower parts of the earth’ (τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς). In line with the view set forth here, the descent to ‘the lower parts of the earth’ is taken as a reference to the grave, though it is the death of Christ that is particularly in view.⁶⁴ This is the natural meaning of the phrase in light of similar phraseology with reference to

authorities who had previously held people in a state of death by tempting them to sin and rebel against God (Eph 2:1-3) (2002, 177). Barth, on the other hand, claims that the phrase must not be read this way since ἡχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν is a typical Hebraism found in the OT and reflected in the LXX that must be translated along the lines of similar constructions in Ephesians, such as ‘to bless with blessing’ (εὐλαγήσας... εὐλογία, Eph 1:3), and ‘to love with love’ (ἀγάπην... ἡγάπησεν, Eph 2:4) (1974, 431).

⁶¹ Overfield draws a theological parallel to Col 2:15 in order to explain the imagery connected with the captives in Eph 4:8. He argues that a similar ascension theology is at work in Col 2:15 as that in Eph 1:20-23 and 4:8. In Col 2:15, the triumphant Christ is seen as parading the defeated powers and authorities, making a public example of them (1976, 123-37).

⁶² According to Wallace, even though ‘only one word from the preceding quotation of Ps 68:18 is repeated, the idiom suggests that the whole verse is under examination’ so that the question the author is asking is ‘what does the quotation from Ps 68:18 mean?’ (1996, 238).

⁶³ The form of expression used to answer the question in v. 9a is εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη, so that the question, ‘now what is this, “he ascended”?’ is answered; ‘if not that he also descended...’.

⁶⁴ There are two other major views on the descent of Christ in this passage, beside the view of Harris, et al., and the view presented in this thesis. A number of scholars view the descent of Christ as his incarnation (MacDonald 2000, 290-91; Cambier 1963, 262-75; Schlier 1971, 192-93; Gnllka 1971, 209; Mußner 1982, 123; Moritz 1996, 81; O’Brien 1999, 296; Barth 1974, 434; Best 1998, 386). This view has the advantage of following the original order in the quote from the psalm. The descent of Yahweh to accomplish victory and then his ascent to resume his triumphant throne is reflected in the descent of Christ to earth to triumph over his enemies before then ascending to his cosmic throne. Another view is that Christ descended to the underworld, or Hades (Arnold 1989, 57-58). Though Arnold doesn’t push it this far, this has been understood by older interpreters as a reference to the descent of Christ into hell, the doctrine of the *descensus ad inferos*. According to some versions of this doctrine, Christ proclaimed his triumph over the powers to gods or goddess who inhabited the netherworld.

Hades, the abode of the dead.⁶⁵ For example, Arnold cites a text that reads: ‘I have been initiated, and I went down (κατέβην) into the [underground] chamber of the Dactyls, and I saw / the other things down below (κάτω)’.⁶⁶ While some have pressed such parallels in order to develop and support a doctrine of the *descensus ad inferos*, all that is in view in Eph 4:9 is a reference to the descent of Christ to the grave—pointing to his death—as the author is not interested here in developing the activities of Christ vis-à-vis any underworld deities.⁶⁷ I simply want to establish the point that the phrase in v. 9 points to the grave as the place to which Christ descended, and that this reference has in view the death of Christ.

This finds confirmation from Eph 2:13-16, where the writer speaks of the death of Christ as the means whereby he triumphed over the powers. He states that the basic division within humanity—in the writer’s view, this is the division between Jews and Gentiles—has been unified ‘by the blood of Christ’ (ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ). Further, these two groups are part of the one body of Christ ‘through the cross’ (διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ), and it is by the cross that Christ

⁶⁵ According to Mußner, ‘Im Brief ist zwar vom Ort der dämonischen und satanischen Macht die Rede..., doch vom Ort der Toten, der Scheol, ist nirgends ausdrücklich die Rede, wenn nicht mit den “unteren Teilen der Erde” dieser angesprochen ist, was durchaus der Fall sein kann, ohne daß deswegen die Idee des *Descensus Christi ad inferos* dahinterstehen müßte’ (1982, 123). Bouttier, however, eliminates the possibility that this phrase can be a reference to the grave because of the cosmology of Ephesians: ‘Mais nous sommes alors embarqués dans des représentations cosmologiques incompatibles avec celles de l’épître: l’existence d’un monde souterrain n’y est pas attestée’ (1991, 182). But this wrongly links a reference to the abode of the dead with a *descensus ad inferos*. While this consideration regarding the cosmology of Ephesians may militate against the descent into Hades, it is no objection against a reference to the grave. Schwindt sees several traditions at work in the quotation of Psalm 68, and is ambivalent about narrowing down the location of the descent of Christ: ‘Gleich ob Eph damit auf die Inkarnation oder den Unterweltsgang anspielt, ist ihm der *Descensus* Ausdruck von Christi Erniedrigung, die ihn aus Liebe zur Kirche zur Lebenshingabe führt’ (2002, 430). Further, he claims that some reference to a *descensus ad inferos* cannot be completely ruled out by this consideration concerning the cosmology of Ephesians raised by Bouttier. ‘Dennoch kann nicht leichthin ausgeschlossen werden, daß hier von Christi Gang in die Unterwelt die Rede ist, denn im Volksglauben ist die mythische Unterweltstopographie nie ganz zum Erliegen gekommen’ (395). While we cannot deny that this text provides fertile material for the development of the doctrine of the *descensus ad inferos*, it seems that all that is in view in this text is a descent to the grave, the abode of the dead.

⁶⁶ Arnold 1989, 57. This text appears as *PGM LXX* in Betz 1992, 297-98.

⁶⁷ Contra Arnold 1989, 58. For a survey of the development of this doctrine and its relationship to Eph 4:8, see Harris 1996, 1-14. Kreitzer develops a somewhat similar line of thought, that the descent of Christ into the lowermost parts of the earth is a veiled reference to the Plutonium of Hierapolis, so that Christ’s descent and ascent ‘stands as a powerful expression of his conquering the forces of death and triumphantly claiming the city of Hierapolis as his own’ (1998, 381-93). Apart from his suggestion that ‘the lowermost parts of the earth’ may be a distant allusion to this geological feature of Hierapolis, there is no indication in the context of Ephesians 4 to confirm Kreitzer’s thesis. Further, the underworld remains outside the worldview encountered in Ephesians, in which the conception of the cosmos consists of two parts—heaven and earth (Lincoln 1990, 245).

has put to death the enmity that existed between them. By his death Christ has overcome the divisive effects of the enemy powers who have so ordered this present evil age as to create and exacerbate divisions within humanity.

This also makes sense against the background of the death and resurrection motif present in Eph 1:20-21, a text that is closely related to 4:8-11.⁶⁸ As M. Huie-Jolly has demonstrated, the death and resurrection motif appears throughout the NT—e.g., Phil 2:6-11—and is closely associated with the ideology of divine warfare.⁶⁹ The descent of Christ in v. 9, therefore, is a reference to his descent to the grave—the abode of the dead—and has in view his death by which he accomplished victory over his enemies. This explains why the writer can apply to Christ the imagery of Yahweh, the victorious Divine Warrior, from Psalm 68, who ascended his heavenly throne after his triumph in battle. The ascent of Christ is a victorious ascent because in his death he triumphed over his enemies. The answer to the question in v. 9a (‘what is meant by this “he ascended”?’), then, is that it can be said of Christ that he ascended and gave gifts because he has the right to do so on the basis of his triumphs over his enemies.

In v. 10, the author states that ‘he himself who descended is also the one who ascended’ (ὁ καταβὰς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβὰς), thereby stressing the humiliation/exaltation pattern that is already present in the passage.⁷⁰ In this, it is similar to Phil 2:6-11, where the humiliation/exaltation pattern is also employed, and where there is also a statement of extreme exaltation. Following his descent to the grave, Christ, the victorious one, also ascended to his throne ‘far above all the heavens’ (ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν). This last phrase recalls the language of exaltation in 1:21-22, where Christ is exalted ‘far above’ (ὑπεράνω) all powers and authorities. In fact, the exaltation of Christ over the powers most likely is in view, as τῶν οὐρανῶν is a metaphor of simple replacement referring to the powers by mentioning the locus of their dwelling.⁷¹ This high exalted status has its goal in the sovereign reign of Christ over the whole cosmos, which is

⁶⁸ Overfield 1976, 123-27, 168-72.

⁶⁹ Huie-Jolly 1997, 191-217. Cf. also Kovacs 1995, 227-47.

⁷⁰ Barth 1974, 434. The pronoun αὐτός is the emphatic pronoun and not the identifying pronoun, since there is no definite article present (Best 1998, 386; Muddiman 2001, 196-97). While Lincoln does not explicitly claim that it is the identifying pronoun, he does stress that its function is to equate the one who ‘by virtue of his ascent became cosmic Lord’ with the one who ‘by his Spirit is active in giving gifts to the Church’ (1982, 23).

⁷¹ O’Brien 1999, 296; Harris 1991, 84.

evident from the final clause in v. 10: ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα ('in order that he might fill all things').

A possible objection to the reading for which I have argued is that it does not explain adequately the writer's elaboration on the quotation from Ps 68:18. This objection is repeatedly applied by Harris to views other than his own.⁷² There are several responses to this potential objection. First, the author had to explain that it was Christ who ascended and was victorious since the imagery has to do with Yahweh in Ps 68. Further, the writer's strategy throughout this letter is to identify Christ as the Divine Warrior, utilizing the same imagery that had been used to speak of Yahweh in the OT in order to include Christ in the identity of the unique God of Israel.⁷³ This was done in 1:20-23 and throughout Ephesians 2. It makes sense, then, for the writer to portray Christ as the exalted and victorious cosmic Lord and to do so by applying to him the imagery used of the conquering Yahweh from Psalm 68. Third, he needs to elaborate on just what kind of ascension this is: It is a *victorious* ascension, giving Christ the right to give gifts to his people. In answer to his own question—'what is the meaning of this ascent'?—the writer states that the ascent of Christ is the triumphant procession of the conquering Warrior to his throne, from which he will bless his people with gifts.

This view, then, makes good sense of the data in the context and provides a satisfying answer to the hitherto intractable problem of the change of verbs in v. 8. It also makes good sense of the imagery of triumph over the powers that previously has been recognized as being present in the text, but which, until now, has not been properly placed within a coherent framework. This view also does justice to the death and resurrection—or, humiliation and exaltation—imagery present in the text, while also integrating it into other major passages in Ephesians, especially 1:20-23. Finally, this reading confirms our broader thesis that the ideology of divine warfare is a necessary key for understanding the argument of Ephesians.

⁷² Harris 1996, 173-74, 177.

⁷³ Cf. Bauckham 1998. Bauckham's work is particularly relevant at this point: 'The profoundest points of New Testament Christology occur when the inclusion of the exalted Christ in the divine identity entails the inclusion of the crucified Christ in the divine identity, and when the Christological pattern of humiliation and exaltation is recognized as revelatory of God, indeed as the definitive revelation of who God is' (1998, 46).

The Gift of the Exalted Christ

In Eph 4:11-16, the author elaborates on just how it is that Christ provides for the church in its mission to be the arena of his triumph over the powers. He gives to the church gifted leaders who will provide for the health and growth of the church in unity and in the process of transformation.⁷⁴ Since the church has the task of being the cosmic arena in which the triumph of God in Christ over the powers is advertised, the exalted Christ has an intense interest in providing resources for his people to be able to live new creation lives.

After the discussion of the exaltation of Christ and the portrayal of Christ as the divine warrior, the writer returns to the discussion he initiated in v. 7 with his statement that Christ ‘gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers’ (καὶ αὐτὸς ἔδωκεν τοὺς μὲν ἀποστόλους, τοὺς δὲ προφῆτας, τοὺς δὲ εὐαγγελιστάς, τοὺς δὲ ποιμένας καὶ διδασκάλους). These figures are leaders in the church, involved in ministries of teaching and oversight. Furthermore, they range from those that are outside of a local church context—the apostles, prophets and evangelists—to those that are most likely rooted in local churches—shepherds and teachers. The writer has in mind here the whole range of the apparatus of church leadership that is intended to guide and watch over the universal church, along with individual churches. These leaders are responsible for the care of the church, through whom ‘the heavenly Lord guides and leads his earthly Church, holds her together and allows her to grow into him’.⁷⁵

The author claims in v. 12 that the end for which Christ has given these gifted leaders to the church is to provide for the complete equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the building up of the body of Christ,⁷⁶ so that

⁷⁴ As stated above, the writer is not here highlighting the giving of χαρίσματα to each individual believer, as may be the case in other Pauline contexts.

⁷⁵ Schnackenburg 1991, 180.

⁷⁶ Each of the clauses expressing these three tasks in v. 12 begins with a preposition, the first with πρὸς, the second two with εἰς. The manner in which these three prepositional clauses relate has been the subject of intense discussion. Many scholars claim that the second two clauses are subordinate to the first in some way because of the change in prepositions, and there is a variety of ways of expressing the manner in which this is done (cf., Gnilka 1971, 213; O’Brien 1999, 302-3; Schlier 1971, 198-99; Hoehner 2002, 549; Schnackenburg 1991, 183). For a survey of interpretive options, see Bouttier 1991, 189-90; Lincoln 1990, 253-54. It makes better sense in the context to read the prepositions as coordinate, so that it is the ministers who are in view in all three prepositional phrases. The exalted Christ gave to the church these gifted leaders so that (1) the church might be completely equipped, (2) so that the leaders might do the work of the ministry and (3) so that these leaders might build up of the body of Christ. There is no thought here of an exclusion of lay people from participating in some way in the building up of the church, especially since lay believers’ active roles are spoken of in vv. 7 and 16, but it is the church leaders that are

the church can attain its goal of becoming the fullness of Christ. The main goal of the church's growth is not unity. The church is to grow in maturity to the extent that it grows into the dimensions of Christ—filling out the mould into which it is poured. The 'not yet' side of the tension between what the church has been created to be (1:23; 2:21-22), and the need for the church to grow into this more fully (cf. 3:19) is prominent here. By his gift to the church, Christ provides for the process of the church realizing the design for which it was created.

This goal is stated in v. 13 in various ways, all referring to the intimate union between Christ and the church—that the church is to grow into its being the fullness of Christ. The author states that the gifted leaders are to carry out their functions 'until we all reach the unity of faith (τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως), and the knowledge of the son of God, unto a mature man, unto the full stature of the fullness of Christ' (v. 13).⁷⁷ As Yoder Neufeld states, 'by his gifts Christ has enabled the church to arrive at himself, the perfect man'.⁷⁸

This process of growth into the full dimensions of Christ himself will facilitate the church taking on characteristics of a more mature community, able to deal with threats to its maturity. No longer will they be susceptible to harmful influences that aim to not only introduce false doctrine, but to destroy the health of the body for selfish gain (v. 14). Rather, the church will be enabled and empowered to build itself up in love as each member of the church plays its part in the lives of others to work for the building up of the entire body of believers (vv. 15-16).

Conclusion

Ephesians 4:1-16 discusses the provision by Christ, the triumphant Divine Warrior, for his people to live out their calling as the arena of the triumph of God in Christ. We have shown how our larger proposed thesis provides satisfying answers to some of the most difficult and heretofore obstinate interpretive

mainly in view in the present passage (Lincoln 1990, 253; Gordon 1994; Muddiman 2001, 200). While some scholars resist such an interpretation on the grounds that it endorses a clerical view of ministry, this is not necessarily meant to be a timeless and exclusive statement of the roles of laity and clergy, but rather the passage is focusing in on the manner in which and purpose for which Christ has gifted the church with leaders.

⁷⁷ The phrase τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως is best rendered 'the unity of the faith', in reference to the confessional unity of Christian communities (Lincoln 1990, 255; O'Brien 1999, 306; Caird 1976, 76).

⁷⁸ Yoder Neufeld 2002, 185.

problems, most importantly the purpose for which Ps 68:18 is cited in 4:8. That this is so also serves to provide further confirmation of our broader thesis that the ideology of divine warfare is vital to understanding the argument of Ephesians.

CHAPTER 7

EMBODYING THE TRIUMPH OF GOD IN CHRIST: THE CHURCH WAGING DIVINE WARFARE AGAINST THE POWERS

Introduction

Ephesians 4:17-6:9, focused on laying out the task(s) of the church, has suffered some harsh treatment at the hands of commentators. For John Muddiman, this half of the letter contains some ‘rather tedious moralizing’.¹ Ernest Best has also had little good to say about this portion of Ephesians, accounting 4:17-6:9 ‘one of its weaknesses’ in that ‘it is mostly banal . . . and lacks the penetrating criticism of behavior found in the certainly genuine Paulines, and in the teaching of Jesus’. A further fault is that ‘it has nothing to say about Christian behavior in the world but restricts itself to the way Christians should treat one another’.² He claims that though ‘the content of the moral teaching may appear in our eyes at times to fall below that of Jesus and Paul’, this need not concern us too much, since the author ‘obviously considered it met his purpose’.³ Further, he says that much of the material in Ephesians 4:17-6:9 is ‘no more than a ragbag of advice’.⁴

Another perspective on Ephesians 4-6 is that of Roy Jeal, who claims that this section of the letter has no logical or cohesive relationship with its first half. He claims that ‘theology and ethics . . . are integrated in Ephesians not by clear, explicit connection and argumentation, but by the rhetorical use of the “sermon”’.⁵ Andrew Lincoln sees a similar dynamic at work, claiming that the connection between the ‘doctrinal’ and ‘ethical’ portions of the letter is only loosely construed according to the rhetorical purpose of the author, who begins with a broad meditation on the glories of salvation before laying out a general ethical vision challenging his readers to effective growth in Christ.⁶

¹ Muddiman 2001, 32.

² Best 1993, 95-96.

³ Best 1998, 74.

⁴ Best 1993, 81.

⁵ Jeal 2000, 74.

⁶ Lincoln 1990, lxxxi.

The opinions of Jeal, Best and Muddiman reflect the wider scholarly consensus on Ephesians, that it must be read more or less as a pastiche of random Pauline teachings that have been woven together by a second generation Pauline imitator.⁷ Yet, even conservative NT scholar Gordon Fee admits that it is difficult to discern any well-woven train of thought that runs through Ephesians 4-6: ‘Although an overall scheme seems to be at work, attempts to refine the flow of thought too closely have not proven altogether satisfactory’.⁸

Our task in this chapter is to demonstrate how our broader proposal regarding the argument of Ephesians provides a satisfying reading of this portion of the letter. I aim to provide answers to the two main criticisms of this section of Ephesians—that the exhortations are random and lack a unified focus, and that this section is not integrally related to the first half of the letter—by demonstrating that there is indeed a coherently developed vision for the task(s) of the church presented in 4:17-6:9 and that it is driven by and integrally connected to Ephesians 1-3.

The main concern of this portion of the letter is to articulate the manner in which the church is to participate in the triumph of God in Christ over the powers and authorities ruling the present evil age. This takes place as they actualize their identity as the New Humanity, which has been created ‘according to God’ (Eph 4:24) and is to imitate the cruciform life and self-giving earthly example of Jesus. This community identity is realized in the hostile setting of the present evil age, overseen by the powers and authorities. The ability of God in Christ to create a new people and to empower them to live new creation lives in such a hostile setting advertises the triumph of God in Christ to the powers.

Before we demonstrate how this section is interpreted within our broader conception of Ephesians, we must develop some significant features of the argument of Ephesians to this point that will inform our proposed reading of this section. As discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis, the epistle’s main concern is with the triumph of God in Christ over the powers. In 1:20-23, the author stated that God had installed Christ as cosmic lord ‘far above’ the powers and authorities that

⁷ E.g., Käsemann 1966, 297. Cf. also Gese: ‘Aus seiner Kenntnis der paulinischen Briefe heraus gelingt dem Verfasser eine *umfassende Gesamtschau* der paulinischen Theologie. Wie wir beobachten konnten, greift er die bei Paulus angelegten unterschiedlichen Tendenzen auf, führt sie zusammen und formt aus ihnen einen in sich geschlossenen Entwurf’ (1997, 271-72).

⁸ Fee 1994, 709.

rule the present evil age. He went on to argue in Ephesians 2 that this exalted status is vindicated by the victories of God in Christ over these fallen powers. God has freed people from the grip of the powers as they held them in death through transgressions and sins. Further, Christ has conquered the law and its disastrous divisive effects in the creation of the New Humanity, one new people made up of formerly divided Jew and Gentile.

This New Humanity is vitally connected to God in Christ by the Spirit. The author stresses the unity of Christ and the church throughout the epistle, referring to the church as the ‘body of Christ’ (1:22-23; 4:12; 5:30), and as the ‘temple’ or ‘household of God’ (2:19-21), with Christ as the source of the life of the church (4:16).

Further, the digression in Eph 3:2-13 provides a pattern for how the triumph of God in Christ is to be epitomized in the life of the church. Here, the writer relates how Paul’s imprisonment is completely consistent with the triumph of God in Christ, demonstrating how Paul’s fruitful ministry despite his humiliating position as a prisoner epitomizes the triumph of God in Christ. Paul’s situation provides an example for how the church is to carry out its call to be the arena of God’s triumph. God has opened up a space within the old age ruled by the powers and has set his new creation people into the midst of it, so that, like Paul, while the church is no longer enslaved by the powers, it is still under the influence of the powers of the old creation, subject to their destructive forces to a degree. The church follows the triumphant pattern of Paul, therefore, when new creation life flourishes within the New Humanity by the power supplied by Christ, even while the church is subject to the forces of the malignant powers. When this occurs, the triumph of God in Christ is made manifest to the powers (3:10), just as the success of the proclamation of Paul while he was in prison similarly advertised the triumph of God in Christ over the powers. This passage is indeed one of the keys for reading this section of Ephesians, since the writer there speaks of the cosmic purpose of the church—it is to be the agent through which the triumph of God is advertised to the powers and authorities.

In our last chapter we discussed the writer’s argument concerning the provision for the church by the exalted Lord Christ. He has equipped the church for growth and infuses this New Humanity with his own life to sustain it and enable it to grow in maturity and to protect itself from the malign influences of the

powers. This then means that the manifestation of the lordship of Christ over the powers depends upon the ability of Christ to empower his people for corporate growth in maturity. That is to say that Ephesians 4:1-16 relates the corporate life of the church to the program of God advertising his exaltation of Christ ‘far above’ the powers and authorities.

In Eph 4:17-6:9 the author elaborates on how the New Humanity participates in the triumph of God over the powers ruling the present evil age, and also exhorts his readers on this basis. This is a call to divine warfare, and an outline of how the church is to execute this warfare with the enemy powers, drawing on the power of God in Christ (cf. Eph 6:10). As his readers actualize their identity as the New Humanity, they participate with the Divine Warrior, embodying his triumph over the powers ruling the present evil age.

Not only do we wish to answer the two main criticisms of this portion of Ephesians mentioned above, but we will provide an alternative to other readings that attempt to find a connection between the two halves of the letter by claiming that Ephesians 1-3 is soteriologically oriented in a general Pauline sense, extolling the great benefits that the readers have received in being blessed by the salvation brought by God in Christ. On such a reading Ephesians 4-6 is read as a broadly conceived Pauline paraenesis at best, and at worst a pastiche of mismatched random Pauline ethical injunctions that only oddly fit together. This more traditional reading relates the ‘ethical’ section to the first half of the letter thematically. Since readers have received God’s great and gracious salvation, they ought to live out a Christian identity consistent with that salvation.⁹

The connection between 1:20-4:16 and 4:17-6:9 for which I will argue, however, is far more organic and integral. The reading presented in this thesis allows the flow of thought in 4:17-6:9 and its connection with the initial portion of the letter to emerge clearly into view. Seeing the initial section as doing more than merely laying out a general soteriology opens up the second half to being more than merely a bland Pauline-flavored ethical vision. It is our task to confirm our broader proposed reading by demonstrating that it provides a satisfying account of this passage of Ephesians, and that it does so naturally.

⁹ E.g., Lincoln 1990.

Two Realms in Conflict (4:17-24)

In 4:17-24 the writer sets two realms in contrast with each other—the New Humanity and the Old Humanity. In utilizing these conceptions, he does not have in mind two natures that co-exist within individuals,¹⁰ but rather two cosmic realms. These two ‘humanities’ are best understood against a Jewish apocalyptic worldview, an essential part of which was a temporal dualism (4 *Ezra* 7:50; 2 *Bar.* 51.8-10).¹¹ These two worlds/ages were, for the most part, not regarded as coincident, but consecutive. That is, they were not two spheres that were in existence at the same time, but rather were consecutive ages on earth that were separated by the judgment day where God would appear in power to judge evil, vindicate the righteous and bring about new creation (4 *Ezra* 6:7-10; 7:112-114).

In the thought-world of Ephesians, however, these two ages are coincident. That is, the new age has dawned with the death and resurrection of Christ (1:20-23) so that it exists in the midst of the old creation ruled by the evil powers—enemy territory. Believers also share in this resurrection life (2:5-6), and the author utilizes ‘new creation’ language in reference to the work of God in Christ in bringing about the creation of the new unified people of God (2:10; 3:9; 4:24).

Though the new age has been inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Christ, the present fallen age continues to exist as well. The powers and authorities that rule this age have had their grip over the world broken by the exaltation of Christ ‘far above’ them to the status of cosmic lord (Eph 1:20-22). Yet their rule of the fallen creation continues. They continue to hold much of humanity in captivity to death via transgressions and sins (2:1-3), and the powers’ malign influence on the church—which consists of those who still belong to the present fallen age—continues to be felt. For this reason the writer speaks in Eph 6:11 about the schemes of the devil in seeking to undermine the growth and health of the church and about a struggle against the powers and rulers of this present evil age. For the author, therefore, the new age has been inaugurated with the death and resurrection of Christ, though the old age and its rule by the powers continues as well. The terms he uses in Ephesians for these two spheres are the ‘New Humanity’ (τὸν καινὸν ἄνθρωπον, 4:24) and the ‘Old Humanity’ (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον, 4:22).

¹⁰ Contra Best 1998, 440-41; Hoehner 2002, 605.

¹¹ Adams 2000, 109; Collins 1997, 84-91; Dahl 2000, 397.

The author discusses in Eph 4:17-24 several more aspects of these two realms. First, these two realms have different rulers—the Old Humanity is that realm over which the powers have ultimate influence and in which they hold humanity captive to death through their influencing people to indulge in transgressions and sins. The New Humanity, on the other hand, is that realm that is united to Christ and receives its life from Christ—it is the new creation and those in it share in the resurrection life of Christ himself. He is their source of life and they have been set free from bondage to death. At the same time, however, as members of the present age that still exists, they are subject to the forces brought to bear by the fallen powers, tempting them to rebel against God and his exalted Lord Christ, and to engage in transgressions and sins bringing about captivity to death.

Further, there are two drastically different operating dynamics at work in these two spheres. The Old Humanity is undergoing decay and dissolution (4:22), and is destined for destruction. The author says in 4:22 that this Old Humanity is the ‘former manner of life’ of his readers and that it is ‘being corrupted (φθειρόμενον) according to the lusts of deceit’. As Lindemann states, ‘Dieser alte Mensch ... geht zugrunde in seiner Bindung an die “Begierden des Betrugs”, d. h. er hat als einziges Ziel letztlich nur den Tod vor Augen’.¹²

The New Humanity, on the other hand, is a realm of new life and new creation that is constantly being renewed. Christ himself is the source of life for the New Humanity and also provides for its growth.

These two realms have drastically different characters as well. The Old Humanity reflects the character of its rulers. As we saw earlier in our Chapter 3, the language of the powers and authorities in Ephesians would have resonated with both Greco-Roman and Jewish audiences, though the author is most likely reflecting the Jewish ideology of the gods of the nations. It is necessary to understand their relationship to the Old Humanity in order to grasp the nature of the conflict in Ephesians and the role that the powers play in it.

The powers ruling the present evil age fulfill a God-given role in creation. They were created to be the mediators of God’s rule over this world. According to Jewish thought, the nation of Israel was deemed to be the special inheritance of

¹² Lindemann 1985, 85.

the God of Israel, but he appointed gods to rule over the nations (Deut 32:8-9; Sir 17:17).¹³ They were given a stewardship to rule the nations and order their corporate life in such a way that the nations would fear the Most High God.

However, these gods have thrown off their God-given stewardship, fallen into rebellion and their rule is characterized by a perversion of their original commission. Instead of being faithful stewards of God's rule, they have corrupted their cultures and have ordered their nations in such a way that those in positions of authority now exploit the weak and powerless, grasping after power and seeking to take any advantage they can in order to satisfy their own lusts for more power, prestige, possessions and sensual gratification (Ps 82:1-8; *Jub.* 15:31).

What is important in this tradition is that the cultures and nations under the rule of these powers have come to resemble the powers themselves, along with their selfish and self-destructive behavior.¹⁴ Ephesians reflects this tradition in that the character of the Old Humanity is oriented according to that of its rulers. Just as the powers have incurred the judgment of God because they have become graspers after the cosmos (Eph 6:12) instead of faithful stewards of the rule of God,¹⁵ so the Old Humanity is characterized by the sins mentioned in the two triads in Eph 4:19 and 5:3. Those in the Old Humanity have been led astray into idolatry (Eph 5:5), having their lives ordered by the evil powers and reflecting their own selfish and self-destructive character.

The New Humanity, on the other hand, is created to reflect the character of its ruler and Lord, Jesus Christ. It has been 'created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the truth' (κατὰ θεὸν κτισθέντα ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ καὶ ὁσιότητι τῇν ἀληθείας) (Eph 4:24). This indicates that the very character of the New Humanity will reflect that of God, since it is created 'according to God'. Further, the author states that the instruction that his readers have received previously not only has to do with Christ, but can literally be expressed as 'learning Christ'. After describing the Old Humanity in 4:17-19, the author makes a striking statement: 'but you did not thus *learn Christ*' (ἐμάθετε τὸν Χριστόν). This enigmatic phrase reflects the manner in which the New Humanity and Christ are conflated throughout the epistle. Here, Christ is nearly identified as the New

¹³ Longenecker 1998, 51.

¹⁴ *Jubilees* depicts the gods of the nations, along with Mastema, deploying evil spirits to tempt humanity and lead them astray (10:1-14; 11:4-6; 12:19-20) (cf. Longenecker 1998, 52).

¹⁵ Longenecker 1998, 54.

Humanity—the readers had previously ‘learned Christ’ when they were taught the entirely new way of living as ‘the body of Christ’—to embody the salvation brought to them by God in Christ.¹⁶ To ‘learn Christ’ is equivalent to actualizing the ethic of the New Humanity.

This is followed by the equally enigmatic statement in v. 21b. After claiming that to ‘learn Christ’ is the same as ‘hearing and being taught in him’ (v. 21a), the author then writes, ‘just as the truth is in Jesus’ (καθώς ἐστὶν ἀλήθεια ἐν τῷ Ἰησοῦ). It appears that with this reference, the writer is thinking of the eschatologically focused life of Jesus—his self-sacrificial example, giving himself to the point of death in order to obtain eschatological glory (cf. Phil 2:5-11).¹⁷ The New Humanity has been created to have the character of ‘goodness, righteousness and truth’ and the concrete example of this characteristic of ‘truth’ is Jesus, who gave himself fully for others. This is especially pertinent at this point because it flies directly in the face of the conduct of the powers and the manner in which they have ordered the world, encouraging people to live selfish lives at the expense of others.

The author’s aim here, then, is to define what he means by the New Humanity being created ‘according to God’. The character of the New Humanity takes after God *in Christ Jesus* in that it is oriented toward the self-sacrificial, cruciform and faithful life of Jesus whereby Jesus gave up his life for the sake of others in order to be raised and exalted by God.

The writer of Ephesians, therefore, sets up these two realms, the New Humanity and the Old Humanity, each having a different operating dynamic, source of life and ruler. The relationship between these two realms will be the topic of the remainder of this section delimited by 4:17-6:9.

The Combatants in the Conflict

While the author lays these two realms side by side, the conflict that is detailed throughout this section of Ephesians is not between these two realms—that is, between the people that inhabit the two realms—but rather between the New Humanity and the powers ruling the Old Humanity. In Eph 4:17-19, the

¹⁶ Yoder Neufeld 2002, 205; Lincoln 1990, 280.

¹⁷ Contra Bouttier, who claims that ‘Le nom de Jésus, à l’absolu, résonne dans sa singularité comme l’écho de la puissance de ce nom invoqué lors du baptême, profession de la *vérité*’ (1991, 209).

writer is discussing the lives of those that inhabit the Old Humanity, but what he has especially in view is the manner of life of those inhabiting the present evil age *as they are subject to the forces brought to bear by the powers*. The warfare to which the church is called, therefore, is waged against the powers and authorities, as the writer claims in Eph 6:12. Several factors point to such a reading.

First, Ephesians consistently portrays the two sides in the conflict as being the powers and the believers to whom the letter is written. The author describes his readers as formerly held captive in death by the powers through transgressions and sins. Further, in 3:10 Paul himself is portrayed as being in conflict with the powers as they bring to bear forces on him that result in his imprisonment. He epitomizes the triumph of God in Christ as his ministry prospers by the power of God in spite of their warfare against him and his ministry. Moreover, in Eph 6:12, the writer explicitly claims that the readers' conflict is not with people in the world outside, but rather with 'rulers' (ἀρχάς), 'powers' (ἐξουσίας), 'cosmic lords' (κοσμοκράτορας) and 'evil spiritual entities in the heavenlies' (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις).

A second consideration is that the activity of the powers as they influence the Old Humanity can be seen in 4:17-19 in the passive participles ἐσκοτωμένοι and ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι. The process of the Gentiles having their minds darkened and being separated from the life of God is portrayed here as something that *happens to* them, though, of course, they are not entirely blameless. It makes good sense to see these corrupting influences as the result of the activity of the powers on the world of the Gentiles.¹⁸

Third, commentators have noted that there is no instruction in Ephesians on how to act toward outsiders, and that the portrait of the outside world in the

¹⁸ The appearance of ματαιότητι ('futility') further confirms this reading, with its allusion to Ecclesiastes (O'Brien 1999, 320), in which ματαιότητι is a major theme, referring to a view of reality apart from a consideration of God and his eschatological judgment. If one considers things merely 'under the sun', then all is 'meaningless, vanity' (Eccl 1:14; 2:11; 6:12). In Jewish tradition, the powers had led humanity astray from worshiping the one true God and into idolatry (*Jub.* 11:4-6). The result of such a process is a failure to consider that all things must be understood—and will only make sense if so understood—in relation to the creator God and his eschatological judgment. This failure to rightly consider and fear God, under the influence of the powers, leads to the Gentiles' existence being 'in the futility of their minds' (ἐν ματαιότητι τοῦ νοὸς αὐτῶν) (Eph 4:17).

letter is extremely bleak.¹⁹ This extreme view of life outside the new creation community serves to confirm that the conflict in Ephesians is between the malign powers and their influences on the church on the one hand, and the church itself on the other. The church's call is to foster new creation life in the space that has been opened up within enemy territory called the New Humanity. They are to do this in the face of the onslaught of the powers, who seek to thwart new creation life from flourishing within the New Humanity. While Best regards this as a major weakness of the letter,²⁰ this explains the relative lack of instruction for relating to outsiders.

Lastly, the example of Paul and the author's recounting of the fruitfulness of his ministry despite his humiliating imprisonment support our reading. The writer did not portray his conflict as one between himself and other people, but against the powers and the condition of the present evil age. Based on the pattern of his life and ministry discussed in Eph 3:2-13, the author exhorts his readers to fulfill their 'calling'—to embody the triumph of God in Christ, just as Paul's own life is an epitome of this triumph.

The Nature of the Conflict

The pattern set by Paul's life and ministry in Eph 3:2-13 is also instructive for how we are to understand the relationship between the New Humanity and the powers. The author portrayed Paul as subject to the influence of the powers because of his participation in the present age, though he was no longer under their bondage to death. He had a share in the resurrection of Christ and had access to the power of God in Christ (2:1-6), the same power that God exercised when he raised Jesus from the dead (1:19-23). In the same way, the New Humanity is no longer subject to bondage under the powers, since they are 'in Christ' and have access to his life and power, which mightily works in them to make them grow in maturity (3:20).

The conflict, then, takes the form of the powers bringing to bear their influences, to which the church is subject because of their participation in this present age—the domain of the powers, enemy territory for the New Humanity—

¹⁹ Dahl 1986, 34; MacDonald 1999, 271. According to MacDonald, 'the allusions in Ephesians to the nature of existence outside of the body of Christ are among the most pessimistic in all of the New Testament' (1999, 272).

²⁰ Best 1993, 95-96.

while the church resists these influences, attempting to live according to the pattern of the New Humanity that is laid out in the letter. These influences originate from the powers' ordering of the present age after their own character, seeking to tempt humanity to live according to the Old Humanity, being selfish, greedy, exploitative of the weak, idolatrous, while neglecting the judgment on the eschatological horizon. In resisting these temptations, the church is to embrace its identity as the temple of the Lord, the dwelling place of God on earth, in the midst of enemy territory. It is the power of God in Christ that enables them to do this, and when new creation life flourishes despite the pressures brought to bear by the powers, the triumph of God in Christ is advertised to the powers, serving notice that their day of final judgment is near.

This conflict sets the backdrop for the author's exhortations in 4:22-24. He urges his readers to 'put off' (ἀποθέσθαι) the 'Old Humanity' (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον), to be renewed in the spirit of their minds, and to 'put on' (ἐνδύσασθαι) the 'New Humanity' (τὸν καὶνὸν ἄνθρωπον), which is the new creation, that takes after the very character of God.²¹

Ephesians 4:17-24, then, has to do with portraying the two realms that are in conflict with each other, with the powers of the present evil age attempting to destroy the New Humanity by inducements to ignore the judgment on the eschatological horizon, to rebel against the fear of Christ and go astray into idolatry and futility. The New Humanity, on the other hand, resists these devices of the powers, seeking to conform to the new creation mode of life that it was created to embody and actualize. This passage sets the stage for the discussion in the remainder of the epistle.

Illustrations of the Conflict (4:25-32)

In this section, the author illustrates how the pattern of transformation from behavior characteristic of the Old Humanity is to be transformed into New Humanity behavior. This vitiates the claim of Best that the author of Ephesians 'rarely directly advises how to keep the injunctions he lays on his readers'.²² Rather than addressing specific sins that characterize the churches to whom he is

²¹ The three infinitives (ἀποθέσθαι, v. 22; ἀνανεοῦσθαι, v. 23; ἐνδύσασθαι, v. 24) are dependent on ἐδιδάχθητε in v. 21 and are to be read with an imperatival force (Bouttier 1991, 209).

²² Best 1993, 81.

writing, the author is here illustrating the pattern of transformation that they are to embody as they embrace their identity as the ‘household of God’.

The following passage follows a set pattern, where the writer first gives an example of Old Humanity behavior followed by New Humanity behavior that is to replace it. Further, he completes the pattern set in vv. 22-24 by including a renewal of thought patterns, so that his readers might also ‘be renewed in the spirit of their minds’ (v. 23).²³

The first example of this pattern of transformation is ‘putting off’ lying and replacing it by speaking truth to one another (v. 25).²⁴ As the temple of God in Christ by the Spirit, lying is utterly inappropriate behavior and is destructive for the health of the new creation community. The renewed way of thinking that is to drive this transformation of behavior is the consideration in the final clause of v. 25: ὅτι ἐσμὲν ἀλλήλων μέλη (‘because we are members of one another’).

The next illustration of the transformative pattern in vv. 26-27 points to the way that mundane changes in behavior reflect the conflict in which the church is engaged. The author tells his readers to take pains to avoid sinning in situations that cause anger.²⁵ He recognizes that in community life anger is a matter of course, but he orders them to avoid letting their anger drive them to sinful actions. They are to make strenuous efforts to restore peace in situations that give rise to anger, not letting the sun set upon an unresolved situation (v. 26b). The writer then appeals to the nature of the conflict that we have argued runs throughout this passage in order to present them with a renewed way of thinking to energize the process of transformation. To fail to resolve anger-causing situations quickly is a grave tactical error in their conflict because it gives the devil a strategic foothold in the community from which to launch divisive and destructive attacks (μηδὲ δίδοτε τόπον τῷ διαβόλῳ, ‘neither give a place to the devil’, v. 27). The devil

²³ Bouttier 1991, 212.

²⁴ Yoder Neufeld argues that ‘the lie’ (τὸ ψεῦδος) refers to more than the practice of telling lies, but ‘represents nothing less than “the old human” in rebellion against God’ (2002, 210). Yoder Neufeld follows Mußner on this point, who argues that, ‘Lügen abzulegen’ –, denkt nicht bloß an eine einzelne Wortlüge, vielmehr an die Lebenslüge des heidnischen way of life... Die bewußte und unbewußte Verlogenheit des ganzen Daseins führt ja immer auch zur verbalen Lüge (1982, 139). Against such a reading is the appearance elsewhere of the singular for ‘lying’ (Lincoln 1990, 300), and especially its appearance here, in a list of illustrations of general patterns of behavior that must be put off, along with other things, like stealing and sinning in anger.

²⁵ The imperative ὀργίζεσθε is best read in a concessive sense; ‘be angry [if you are angry], but do not sin’ (Wallace 1989, 353-72; Gnika 1971, 224-25; *pace* Lincoln 1990, 301; Best 1998, 448).

is here portrayed as plotting against the New Humanity, looking to exploit any situation that might allow him to infiltrate and cause ruin. An existing situation within a new creation community that gives rise to anger would provide such an opportunity.

The motivation given for transformative behavior serves to reinforce our point regarding the nature of the conflict in Ephesians. The church's warfare against Satan and the powers takes the form of resistance to temptations to sin against others. The strategy of the New Humanity is to foster new creation life within communities. A further point must be made about the nature of warfare in Ephesians. Just as expectations were subverted in Eph 2:16 in that Christ triumphs by his death and puts to death enmity—echoing Yahweh's waging war against the weapons of war in the Psalms—so here, warfare entails not giving in to anger, rather than conducting warfare in 'righteous anger'.

In vv. 28-29, two more illustrations are provided. The author writes that the thief must steal no longer, but rather work so that he has something with which to contribute to those who have a need (v. 28), stressing again the responsibility that each member of the community has for every other member.²⁶ Further, he notes the type of speech that ought to characterize the community (v. 29). Words that bring about decay or that in any way will prevent the flourishing of new creation life within church communities must be ruled out. In place of destructive speech, the author advocates speaking what is good so that those with needs may be encouraged and built up. The motivation that drives such a transformation of patterns of speech in communities is that each person is responsible to be an agent of grace to others.

Finally, vv. 30-32 provide a summary of the pattern of transformation that has gone before, in that the behavior called for here is more allusive and general. The writer calls for 'putting off' πικρία ('bitterness'), θυμὸς ('wrath'), ὀργή ('anger'), κραυγὴ ('angry shouting'), βλασφημία ('slander'), along with πάση κακίᾳ ('all evil'). His readers are to be kind and compassionate, forgiving each other in the same way that they all have experienced the forgiveness of God in Christ (v. 32). The motivation for this change in behavior is the presence of the

²⁶ This command against stealing does not imply that the author is addressing a specific situation where stealing has become a problem (contra Gnllka 1971, 271; Muddiman 2001, 226-27).

Holy Spirit among them, who provides for their union with God in Christ, the source of their new creation life. They have been sealed (ἐσφραγίσθητε) by the Spirit, marked out by his presence as the eschatological people of God (v. 30). Any rupture in the community life of the church caused by bitterness or anger would foster destruction in the New Humanity, working against the purposes of God by the Spirit.

Exhortation (5:1-7)

Eph 5:1-7 consist of exhortations based directly upon the writer's discussion of the New Humanity.²⁷ In 5:1-2, he exhorts his readers based on the character of the New Humanity, before then giving a warning based on the destinies of both the Old Humanity and the New Humanity.

First, the author exhorts his readers to imitate God in their relationships with one another. Just as they are to forgive because they have been forgiven, they are to 'be imitators of God' (γίνεσθε μιμηταὶ τοῦ θεοῦ) because their character has been shaped by God himself, having been created 'according to God' (4:24). Their corporate life must reflect their character. In his previous discussion, the author had defined being created 'according to God' as having the same character as the self-giving Christ. Here, too, he claims that to imitate God is to follow the example of love set by Christ, who 'loved us and gave himself up for us' (5:2).

This call to imitate God is followed by an exhortation that is based on the destinies of the two 'humanities' outlined above. The writer claims that their identity as the new creation people of God excludes certain things from their communities. He states that πορνεία ('fornication'), ἀκαθαρσία ('uncleanness') and πλεονεξία ('greed') must find no place among them because they are ἅγιοις ('saints'). And such things as αἰσχρότης ('indecenty'), μωρολογία ('foolish talk') and εὐτραπελία ('vulgar talk') must be replaced by εὐχαριστία ('giving of thanks'). He then emphasizes the eschatological dimensions of the two humanities, noting that those with Old Humanity patterns of life have no part in the destiny of the New Humanity. The New Humanity is

²⁷ While Lincoln claims that the section that begins in Eph 4:25 continues until 5:2 (1990, 294), it makes better sense to regard 5:1 as a point of transition. The illustrations of the pattern of transformation no longer continue after 5:1 and the appearance of the term 'to walk' (περιπατεῖτε) in v. 2 indicates a transition (cf. Bouttier 1991, 203, 218-19; Gnllka 1971, 241).

destined to be transformed into the ‘kingdom of Christ and God’ (v. 5). Those whose lives are characterized by this present evil age will share in the eschatological end of the Old Humanity, which is presently undergoing the decay that will lead to its ultimate destruction (4:22).

The author identifies one of the strategies whereby the powers can dilute the effectiveness of the New Humanity in encouraging and fostering new creation life—spreading the deception that there is no judgment for the Old Humanity on the eschatological horizon. He warns his readers to not be deceived by this tactic (v. 6), calling this strategy ‘empty words’ (κενοῖς λόγοις). On the contrary, no one who participates in the kind of behavior that characterized their lives when they were held in bondage by the powers will share the destiny of the New Humanity—participating in the eschatological kingdom of Christ and of God (v. 5).

This brief section of exhortations allows us to make two key points. First, it demonstrates the integrated nature of this section of the letter. These are not random Pauline injunctions that are woven clumsily. Rather, they build directly upon the writer’s discussion of the two spheres in the apocalyptic frame of reality and the nature of the conflict between them. Second, that these practical injunctions are best understood within the context of the conflict between these two cosmic spheres confirms that the key to this section of Ephesians is the conflict between the two humanities—the Old Humanity and the New Humanity.

The Advance of the New Humanity (5:8-14)

In Eph 5:8-14 the author continues to discuss the conflict between the two realms, elaborating here on the how the New Humanity advances upon and overtakes the Old Humanity. He claims that the flourishing of new creation life in church communities is the means by which the ‘light’ advances upon the ‘darkness’ of the Old Humanity, calling people out of darkness into the fruitful existence of the light. This is perhaps the clearest passage in which the writer speaks about the manner in which the New Humanity is to interact with those still living under the bondage of the present evil age.²⁸ While the New Humanity wages warfare against the evil powers—a warfare of resistance—the relationship

²⁸ Best claims that nowhere in Ephesians are the readers told how they are to interact with outsiders. He views this passage as having to do with believers rebuking fellow believers (1998, 494).

to outsiders is quite different. It involves exposing their deeds and calling them out of darkness into the light of Christ in the New Humanity.

The author identifies his readers as ‘light’ (φῶς) and as the ‘children of light’ (τέκνα φωτός) (v. 8). While they were once ‘darkness’ (σκότος), they are now ‘light in the Lord’ and are to walk in such a way that they will bear the fruit of the light, which consists in ‘goodness and righteousness and truth’ (ἀγαθωσύνη καὶ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἀληθεία) (v. 9). This is a command to foster the growth of new creation life in their communities, so that they will reflect the character of God, according to whom the New Humanity has been created (4:24). Since they are no longer darkness, they are to have nothing to do with the ‘unfruitful’ (ἀκάρποις) deeds of darkness, but ‘rather are to expose (ἐλέγχετε) them’.

This call to expose the deeds of darkness is a call to encounter the darkness—the realm over which the evil powers rule—and to transform it by exposing it to the light. This adds a new dimension to the warfare of the New Humanity against the powers of the present age. Not only are believers called to resist the temptations inherent in the present fallen age, but they are to advance upon the territory held in bondage by the powers. The warfare of the New Humanity is not waged by physical opposition, nor by a stance of hostility to those in the darkness. The logic of vv. 13-14 is cryptic, but it elaborates the manner in which the New Humanity calls people out of darkness into new creation light.²⁹

In v. 13, the writer describes the process by which the light overtakes the darkness. He writes that ‘all things that are being exposed by the light are made manifest’ (τὰ πάντα ἐλεγχόμενα ὑπὸ τοῦ φωτός φανεροῦνται). This verse has been the subject of much debate, but it makes good sense to read the author as maintaining that when the light meets the darkness and exposes the deeds of darkness, they are ‘made manifest’ (φανεροῦνται) for what they truly are—the deeds that bring about ultimate destruction.³⁰ By exposure to the New Humanity

²⁹ O’Brien 1999, 372.

³⁰ Some interpreters maintain that only the exposure of the deeds of fellow community members are in view (Gnilka 1971, 255-56; Best 1998, 493-94). The context, however, indicates that these are the deeds done by those who are still in the darkness, and the deeds that are done are specified as ‘the unfruitful deeds of darkness’ (v. 11). Further, even though v. 12 speaks of the fact that these things are too shameful to even speak of, this is not a prohibition of speaking of them, but merely a qualitative statement about the moral quality of the deeds—they are so heinous as to be of the kind about which it is shameful to speak.

and the new creation life that flourishes among believing communities, those who are in the darkness are brought to the realization that their deeds put them in danger of eschatological judgment, since they belong to the present evil age that is headed for destruction.

The writer then claims that this manifestation of the quality of their deeds has a transforming power upon those who are ‘darkness’. In v. 14 he writes that ‘all things that are made manifest are light’ (πάν τὸ φανερούμενον φῶς ἐστίν). The author claims that those who have seen the true nature of their deeds are then absorbed by the light.³¹ This accounts for the saying, ἔγειρε, ὁ καθεύδων, καὶ ἀνάστα ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν, καὶ ἐπιφάσει σοι ὁ Χριστός (‘awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead and Christ will shine on you’). Whatever the origin of this fragment,³² the author utilizes it at this point to demonstrate the manner in which the New Humanity calls upon those in the darkness to turn from darkness to light, from the death of the existence under the influence of the powers, to the light of life in the New Humanity.

³¹ Engberg-Pederson argues that ἐλέγχειν has as its root meaning that of ‘confronting somebody or something with the aim of showing him or it to be, in some determinate respect, at fault’ (1989, 97). Such a definition could be used to support the reading we have presented above. Engberg-Pederson, however, claims that the argument here involves the manifestation of the nature of the deeds of darkness *to those who are light*, with a view to warning them against being tempted to fall back into performing such deeds. He bases this reading on viewing those who are now ‘light in the Lord’ being ‘divided selves’, susceptible to being drawn back into the darkness. This explains the logic of v. 12. Engberg-Pederson claims that v. 12 is included as a warning not to speak of the shameful things done in secret so that they will not be tempted to engage in them. That they are confronted and made manifest is an aid to those who are ‘light’, because having their nature fully manifest will evacuate the attractiveness from the deeds of darkness, protecting those who are ‘light’ from temptation (101-103). Though we agree that Engberg-Pederson’s discussion of the meaning of ἐλέγχειν has great merit, his reconstruction of the argument in vv. 12-14 is unconvincing. It makes little sense to view the beneficiaries of the exposure and manifestation of the deeds of darkness as being believers, or members of the New Humanity. The logic of the passage seems to initiate from the believers and move out toward those in darkness, and the exposure of the shameful deeds has in view the manifestation for the sake of those who are ‘darkness’. Best sums up the logic well: ‘believers in some way, by word or example, expose to those who perform works of darkness the true nature of their actions as works of darkness’ (1998, 492-93). Further, Engberg-Pederson’s notion of the ‘divided self’ is foreign to this context. He claims that the ‘light/darkness’ theme points to inner attitudes and thus to divided selves being tempted to return to the deeds of darkness. Yet ‘light’ and ‘darkness’ are not here employed to refer both to the objective deeds done as well as inner attitudes, but rather describe two mutually exclusive spheres of humanity. Engberg-Pederson’s notion of the divided self does not arise naturally from the flow of the passage and is of little use in accounting for the logic of these verses. It makes better sense to read the passage as having in view the manner in which the light confronts and transforms the darkness.

³² A number of commentators suggest that this is a baptismal formula of some kind (Martin 1991, 63; Perkins 2000, 11:438; O’Brien 1999, 374), though this remains speculation because of the absence of any evidence. It appears more likely that it may be a hymnic fragment, perhaps a call to celebrate the choice of God to have his people reflect his own glory, based on Isa 60:1-4 (cf. Bouttier 1991, 230; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 235-36).

This reading is supported by the pattern of conversion of those who constitute the New Humanity—those who were formerly ‘darkness’ but who are now ‘light’ (5:8). Their conversion provides the motivation for the flourishing of new creation life (‘walk as children of light’ ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε, v. 8b), which now drives the exposure and conversion of others likewise trapped in darkness but who will be transformed into the light of new creation.

This passage undermines the claim of Best that Ephesians has nothing to say about how believers are to relate to those outside their communities. While the instruction here certainly is given in broad brushstrokes, the author here lays out how the New Humanity is to relate to the outside world. The New Humanity is to seek the transformation of the Old by exposing the deeds of darkness and calling people into the light.

Exhortation (5:15-21)

After outlining the manner in which the New Humanity is designed to advance upon the Old Humanity and transform darkness into light, the author now exhorts his readers with this in mind. He urges them to be diligent to carry out this commission of transformation and to not become complacent, since the opposition they face in their conflict with the powers is so cunning and relentless. He begins by exhorting them based on the nature of their commission in relation to the outside world. Because the New Humanity is to transform the darkness to light by the flourishing of new creation life in their communities, he commands them in v. 15 to ‘watch carefully how you walk (περιπατεῖτε), not as unwise (ἄσοφοι) but as wise (σοφοί)’.

In wisely responding to their commission to transform the darkness, the readers of Ephesians will engage in ‘redeeming (ἐξαγοραζόμενοι) the time, because the days are evil’ (v. 16). This enigmatic command might be read as a call not to waste valuable opportunities to transform the darkness into light, made all the more urgent because of the evil days that those in the New Humanity inhabit.³³ While such a note of urgency is surely present, Lincoln suggests that the author here is issuing a slightly more general command, along the lines of the injunction in Eph 5:11-14 about the transformation of the darkness into light.³⁴

³³ Kitchen 1994, 98; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 237.

³⁴ Lincoln 1990, 341.

Since the two injunctions surrounding v. 16 both make the point of being shrewd in taking opportunities to carry out the commission to be transforming agents in the midst of the darkness, it makes good sense to read the exhortation to ‘redeem the time’ in terms of the imagery of the light transforming the darkness. The writer urges his readers to walk wisely by redeeming aspects of the present fallen age over which the powers rule, transforming the darkness into light, and spreading new creation life into as many spheres of this age as possible.

As Lincoln noted in referring to the present fallen age, it is a ‘spatio-temporal complex wholly hostile to God’.³⁵ Within this framework, *καιρόν* (‘time’) may have a broader significance than merely the passage of time, and may even signify more than ‘opportune time’, referring to the general ‘spirit of the age’, or certain other aspects of this present age, the broader cultural thought-patterns and ideologies created and cultivated by the powers. The author is commanding his readers that in this conflict with the powers they are to overtake and redeem aspects of the present fallen age so that they, too, can be affected and transformed by new creation life.

The motivation for this is that the ‘days are evil’ (*αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ εἰσὶν*) (v. 16). Because the powers hold the present age in thrall, this redemption of the present age must be done purposefully and strategically. In v. 17, the writer orders his readers to avoid being ‘foolish’ (*ἄφρονες*), neither falling into complacency or reverting to Old Humanity behavior, which is utterly inappropriate given the state of conflict with the powers and the commission of the New Humanity—which is also ‘the will of the Lord’ (*τὸ θέλημα τοῦ κυρίου*, v. 17)—to be the agent of transformation.

In a final exhortation that sums up much of this task-oriented section and provides a transition to the *Haustafel*, the writer exhorts his readers based on his development of the identity of the church as the temple of God throughout the letter. In Eph 5:18, he urges his readers, ‘do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation, but be filled by the Spirit’ (*μὴ μεθύσκεσθε οἴνῳ, ἐν ᾧ ἐστὶν ἄσωτία, ἀλλὰ πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι*). While this initial negative command has been understood in several different ways,³⁶ I have argued in a previous

³⁵ Lincoln 1990, 84.

³⁶ C. J. Rogers, Jr. argues that the passage be read against the cult of Dionysius, where intoxication by wine would lead to loss of self-control and worship expressed through sexual

publication that it is best read in line with the preceding contrast between wisdom and folly so that this is a prohibition of indulging in behavior that is characteristic of the Old Humanity.³⁷ Yoder Neufeld notes that similar exhortations to avoid drunkenness are common to divine warfare contexts, which call those about to engage in battle to be alert and ready.³⁸

In contrast to this Old Humanity way of life, the author exhorts his readers to carry out their identity as the household of God, the place where God in Christ dwells by the Spirit. This is the force of the command to ‘be filled by the Spirit’ (πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι).³⁹ The writer had previously noted that the church is the new temple of God by the Spirit in Eph 2:21-22, the same phenomenon to which he refers in 1:23, where the church is ‘the fullness’ (τὸ πλήρωμα) of Christ. Further, he had prayed that God would work powerfully in his people so that they might be ‘filled’ (πληρωθῇτε) with all the ‘fullness of God’ (πλήρωμα τοῦ θεοῦ). Finally, he had discussed the giving of gifted leaders by Christ for the purpose of the growth of the church unto the measure of ‘the fullness of Christ’ (τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ) (4:13). Therefore, in his positive command in 5:18, he is not exhorting his readers to be *controlled* by the Spirit vis-à-vis intoxication with wine,⁴⁰ but rather to actualize effectively their identity as the dwelling place of God in Christ by the Spirit.

He explains how they are to do this in vv. 19-21. The corporate life of the New Humanity conforms to its identity as the dwelling place of God by

debauchery (1979, 249-57). According to P. W. Gosnell, the negative command should be read against Greco-Roman mealtime practices where the evening meals were followed by discussion around the table. Interaction would be hindered if the participants were drunk (1993, 364-71). There is little in the letter itself, however, that would suggest that this specific problem is being addressed (O’Brien 1999, 388). Best notes that most of Gosnell’s evidence for this type of mealtime activity has been drawn from cultured authors, describing the lifestyles of those of the cultural elite. Though it is quite possible that a number of the readers of Ephesians were drawn from such circles, it is unlikely that this would have been a widespread problem among the churches, and one which the author addressed in such a cryptic fashion (1998, 509).

³⁷ Gombis 2002, 266. Not only is this consistent with the contrast in the present context, but with Pauline usage elsewhere. In 1 Thess 5:6-8 Paul identifies believers as ‘sons of light and sons of day’. They are ‘not of night nor of darkness’, (v. 5) and are not to sleep, but must be alert and sober (v. 6). Sobriety is set against drunkenness, which takes place ‘at night’ (v. 7). Similarly, in Rom 13:12-13, Paul contrasts the ‘night’, which is about to pass, with the ‘day’, which is imminent. Believers must ‘lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light’ (v. 12). They are to ‘behave properly as in the day’ and ‘put on the Lord Jesus Christ’, instead of participating in activities that typically take place in the darkness, such as ‘drunkenness’ (v. 13).

³⁸ Yoder Neufeld 1997, 105-106.

³⁹ The dative expression ἐν πνεύματι is best read in an instrumental sense, in line with similar expressions throughout Ephesians (2:22; 4:30) (Gombis 2002, 266; contra Best 1998, 508; Lincoln 1990, 344; Köstenberger 1997, 231; Bouttier 1991, 235).

⁴⁰ Gombis 2002, 264-66; contra Schnackenburg 1991, 237; Lincoln 1990, 344-45.

speaking (λαλοῦντες) to one another in psalms and humans and spiritual songs, singing (ᾄδοντες) and making melody (ψάλλοντες) in your hearts to the Lord, giving thanks (εὐχαριστοῦντες) always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Father, subordinating (ὑποτασσόμενοι) yourselves to one another in the fear of Christ.⁴¹

This exhortation to participate fully in carrying out the church's identity as the household of God is a summary command to the instruction and exhortations given thus far regarding the church as the New Humanity. It also provides a point of transition to the writer's broad vision for the corporate life of the New Humanity, focusing more specifically on its life as the 'household of God'.

Reconstituting the Cosmos: A Manifesto for the New Humanity (5:22-6:9)

On a typical reading of Ephesians, it appears that the *Haustafel* in Eph 5:22-6:9 unnecessarily extends an already over-long 'ethical' section of the letter, so that it slowly and torturously runs out of steam by the end.⁴² Best also criticizes the *Haustafel* for its lack of instruction on mixed marriages, calling it 'pastorally defective'.⁴³ Our task is to demonstrate, to the contrary, that the *Haustafel* plays a strategic role in anchoring and completing this section of the letter, perhaps even providing something of a high point at its conclusion.

A number of scholars regard the *Haustafel* to have an apologetic thrust, an attempt to shield the new Christian movement from the suspicion that it might undermine contemporary social structures and ultimately threaten the stability of the empire.⁴⁴ The appearance of the *Haustafel* here reflects the author's 'sensitivity to wider social expectations',⁴⁵ and his aim is to pacify the fears of those who suspected the Christians of being a subversive movement.⁴⁶ This

⁴¹ The five participles in vv. 19-21 are most commonly read as result or effect (Kitchen 1994, 98-99; Lincoln 1990, 345; O'Brien 1999, 394; cf. also Lindemann 1985, 98-99), so that being controlled by the Spirit results in the doing of the participles. But on such a reading, there is nothing to define what the writer means by the enigmatic command in v. 18. That is, if the participles are the result of being controlled by the Spirit, *how* does this control take place? Reading the participles as means provides a satisfying solution to this problem, since it describes *how* the command in v. 18 is accomplished, and fits well within the argument of the letter. For further discussion of the relationship between v. 18 and the five participles, see Gombis 2002, 268-71; cf. also Yoder Neufeld 2002, 241; Gniska 1971, 270; Schlier 1971, 246.

⁴² Cf. Muddiman 2001, 32; Best 1993, 81.

⁴³ Best 1998, 526. Best further states that 'The advice of the household code echoes in large part what the better pagan moralists were saying and is in no sense revolutionary' (1993, 85).

⁴⁴ Muddiman 2001, 278; Lincoln 1990, 397; cf. also MacDonald 1988, 109.

⁴⁵ Towner 1993, 419.

⁴⁶ Muddiman 2001, 278.

would have been especially important in regard to the Roman empire, which valued duty and order and was ‘suspicious of any potential threats to [its] social order’.⁴⁷ Keener claims that ‘Groups accused of undermining the moral fabric of Roman society thus sometimes protested that they instead conformed to traditional Roman values, by producing their own lists, or “Household Codes” fitting those normally used in their day’.⁴⁸

David Balch argues for such a view, with reference to 1 Pet 2:13-3:9, based on the strategy of both Philo and Josephus when facing the accusations that Jewish proselytism was ruining the social fabric of Roman society. Pointing to the stability of the typical Jewish home, Philo writes,

Wives must be in servitude to their husbands, a servitude not imposed by violent ill-treatment but promoting obedience in all things. Parents must have power over their children. . . .The same holds for any other persons over whom he [a man] has authority . . . (*Hypothetica* 7.3, 5).⁴⁹

According to Balch, Josephus writes with a similar purpose:

The woman, says the law, is in all things inferior to the man. Let her accordingly be submissive, not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed, for the authority has been given by God to the man (*Ag. Ap.* II.199).⁵⁰

MacDonald argues that the *Haustafel* appears in Ephesians with the same goal, aimed at ‘reducing the tension between community members and outsiders’.⁵¹

Such a reading, however, is less convincing than it initially appears, as there is little evidence within Ephesians that an apologetic thrust is present.⁵² One searches in vain for any indication that the writer is trying to justify Christian communities against the suspicions of Rome. As has been noted by a number of commentators, Ephesians is concerned mainly with the internal life of new

⁴⁷ Keener 1993, 587.

⁴⁸ Keener 1992, 145-46.

⁴⁹ Balch 1981, 54.

⁵⁰ Balch 1981, 54.

⁵¹ MacDonald 1988, 109; 2000, 337-38. This reading of the *Haustafel* in Ephesians usually regards the letter as coming from the post-Apostolic period when attitudes toward the participation of women in the churches hardened and there was a backlash against early Pauline egalitarian ideals. According to Mußner, ‘Man muß also die Haustafelethik auch aus der geschichtlichen Entwicklung der Urkirche heraus verstehen, wobei nun freilich der von Paulus in Gal 3,28 aufgestellte Grundsatz . . . im chrislichen “Haus” so nicht realisiert wurde, wie er in seiner Idealität klingt’ (1982, 153).

⁵² Perkins 2000, 11:454.

creation communities rather than with relationships with outsiders. After his harsh critique of pagan culture throughout the present section of the letter, it is hardly credible to claim that the writer is attempting to find common ground between Christian communities and the surrounding culture. Far from minimizing the differences between what he calls the Old and New Humanity, the author stresses the absolute incompatibility of the two spheres.

Further, it is inappropriate to claim that because household codes were utilized by some ancient writers in an apologetic context, such a form must necessarily have this purpose in every context in which it appears.⁵³ While this seems fairly obvious, the assumption that the *Haustafel* has an apologetic purpose in Ephesians is based on little evidence beyond this connection. According to Elliott, there is ‘a tendency to treat all the New Testament household codes *en bloc* rather than to inquire concerning a specific function of a code within a specific document’.⁵⁴ In our investigation the most important factor in determining the purpose for which the author used this convention is the literary context in which it appears.

I will argue below that the writer, via the *Haustafel*, is laying out the constitution for the New Humanity, painting in broad strokes a vision for how people ought to conduct themselves in this New Humanity, thus epitomizing the triumph of God in Christ. He’s already said that the church is in conflict with the present fallen age and the powers that rule it. Now, following on from 5:18-21, he moves to give a comprehensive view of what relationships ought to look like in the New Humanity. So, it is a manifesto for an entire society and does not merely have the modern notion of the nuclear family in view, though certainly it includes this. As Elliott states, the *Haustafel* functions to ‘concretize the communal implications of the early Christian proclamation of salvation’.⁵⁵ The author’s instruction for how the New Humanity is to operate is not given in abstraction from mundane life, but rather is given in the form of discussing the relationships

⁵³ Hartman objects to referring to household codes as a literary form (1988, 219-32), but his objections are based on an exceptionally narrow definition, and his qualifications give away much of the case for which he argues.

⁵⁴ Elliott 1981, 208. While scholars are generally more confident that the *Haustafel* in 1 Peter has an apologetic thrust vis-à-vis the *Haustafel* in Ephesians, Elliott challenges this notion, arguing that such a view is myopic and does not properly consider the literary and theological features of the letter (1981, 165-232).

⁵⁵ Elliott 1981, 219.

within the household,⁵⁶ just as ancient political philosophers utilized this form with a similar purpose.⁵⁷

When ancient political theorists addressed the proper ordering of the *politeia*, they wrote about the ordering of the household, utilizing a form similar to the *Haustafel* found in Ephesians—the *oikonomia* tradition.⁵⁸ As Elliott states, the household constituted ‘a chief basis, paradigm and reference point for religious and moral as well as social, political, and economic organization, interaction, and ideology’.⁵⁹ In his work, *Politics*, written about 335 BCE, Aristotle writes:

Now that it is clear what are the component parts of the state, we have first of all to discuss household management (οἰκονομία); for every state is composed of households (ἐξ οἰκῶν). Household management falls into departments corresponding to the parts of which the household in its turn is composed; and the household in its perfect form consists of slaves and freemen. The investigation of everything should begin with its smallest parts, and the primary and smallest parts of the household are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children; we ought therefore to examine the proper constitution and character of each of these three relationships, I mean that of mastership, that of marriage..., and thirdly the progenerative relationship (*Pol.* I 1253b 1-14).

In a further passage he again relates the household to the state:

... [E]very household is part of a state, and these relationships are part of the household, and the excellence of the part must have regard to that of the whole (*Pol.* I 1260b 12).

Balch cites this passage from Areius Didymus (70-10 BCE), making a similar connection:

Having sufficiently defined ‘virtues’ and, more or less, the many crowded headings of the topos on ‘ethics’, it is necessary successively to go through in detail both ‘household management’ and ‘politics’, since the human being is by nature a political animal. A primary kind of association

⁵⁶ The ‘household’ in the ancient world included more than the modern conception of the nuclear family, and was more like a modern plantation or family business, even, as Wallace-Hadrill suggests, something like a neighborhood (2003, 3-18). It included extended family, employees, slaves and possibly their families (Thurston 1995, 138-39; Martin 2003, 207-30).

⁵⁷ According to Mayer, ‘Bereits Aristoteles bestimmte den Aufbau der antiken Gesellschaft anhand der drei Komponenten Ehe, Hauswesen, Staat. . . Deshalb finden sich Ausdrücke, die in den Bereich familiärer Sprache gehören, ganz selbstverständlich neben Ausdrücken, die der politischen Diktion entstammen’ (2002, 177). For a history of research on the household codes in the NT, see Dunn 1996; Motyer 1989; Balch 1988.

⁵⁸ Elliott 1981, 214; Lührmann 1975, 79; 1980, 83-97; Balch 1981, 34, 109.

⁵⁹ Elliott 1981, 213.

(*politeia*) is the legal union of a man and a woman for the begetting of children and for sharing life. This is called a household and is the source for a city, concerning which it is also necessary to speak. For the household is like any small city, if, at least as is intended, the marriage flourishes, and the children mature and are paired with one another; another household is founded, and thus a third and a fourth, and out of these, a village and a city. After many villages come to be, a city is produced. So just as the household yields for the city the seeds of its formation, thus also it yields the constitution (*politeia*). Connected with the house is a pattern of monarchy, of aristocracy and of democracy. The relationship of parents to children is monarchic, of husbands to wives aristocratic, of children to one another democratic (*Epitome* II.147,26-148,16).⁶⁰

Further, instances of the *oikonomia* tradition addressed the three relationships of husband/wife, parent/child and master/slave because these relationships within the household typified, or were models of, the kinds of relationships found in the *politeia*.⁶¹ In *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle notes that,

One may find likenesses and so to speak models of these various forms of a constitution in the household. The relationship of father to sons is regal in type, since a father's first care is for his children's welfare. This is why Homer styles Zeus 'father', for the ideal of kingship is paternal government. Among the Persians paternal rule is tyrannical, for the Persians use their sons as slaves. The relation of master to slaves is also tyrannic, since in it the master's interest is aimed at. The autocracy of a master appears to be right, that of the Persian father is wrong; for different subjects should be under different forms of rule. The relationship of husband to wife seems to be in the nature of an aristocracy: the husband rules in virtue of fitness, and in matters that belong to a man's sphere; matters suited to a woman he hands over to his wife. When the husband controls everything, he transforms the relationship into an oligarchy, for he governs in violation of fitness, and not in virtue of superiority. And sometimes when the wife is an heiress, it is she who rules. In these cases then authority goes not by virtue but by wealth and power, as in an oligarchy. . . . Democracy appears most fully in households without a master, for in them all the members are equal; but it also prevails where the ruler of the house is weak, and everyone is allowed to do what he likes. Under each of these forms of government we find friendship existing between ruler and ruled, to the same extent as justice (*Eth. nic.* VIII 1160b 23-1161a 10).⁶²

These examples are only a few of many that could be cited demonstrating 'the antiquity, continuity and universality of the association between the subject

⁶⁰ Cited in Balch 1988, 41.

⁶¹ Balch 1981, 34-35

⁶² Cited in Balch 1981, 35.

matter “concerning the *politeia*” and that concerning “household management” (*oikonomia*).⁶³ This close connection between the *oikonomia* tradition and political ethics indicates that in Ephesians 5:22-6:9 the author is making a ‘latent political claim’ and his discussion is a critique of conventional societal conditions.⁶⁴ The *Haustafel* in Ephesians, then, presents a comprehensive vision of the eschatological New Humanity—the new creation *politeia*—realized under the conditions of this present fallen age.⁶⁵ It is a manifesto for a radically new society. Because the household was a microcosm of the entire believing community,⁶⁶ it provides a concrete model for how the readers of Ephesians can carry out the command in Eph 5:18-21 to be ‘the household of God’ (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, Eph 2:19).

This vision of the New Humanity is elaborated against the chaotic, destructive and divisive social patterns created and fostered by the evil powers, who have perverted the created order in such a way that has affected every aspect and level of society. Those in positions of power manipulate, dominate and exploit those who are weaker in order to increase in social status and honor.⁶⁷ Those who have less social leverage are tempted to rebel against such oppressive authority structures, or to develop (self-)destructive strategies for survival. As stated above, the condition of the Old Humanity is a product and reflection of the character of the evil powers who left their appointed stewardship of creation and plunged the cosmos into disarray, disorder and chaos.

The *Haustafel* must also be read as an extension or elaboration of the command in Eph 5:18-21 to ‘be filled by the Spirit’—which, as we argued above, is a call to embody and actualize the identity of the New Humanity as the dwelling place of God in Christ. The *Haustafel* is not subordinate merely to the final participle ὑποτασσόμενοι, though this participle provides the point of transition.

⁶³ Elliott 1981, 214.

⁶⁴ Elliott 1981, 219; Lührmann 1975, 79-80.

⁶⁵ Lührmann 1975, 70-71.

⁶⁶ Elliott 1981, 219. Cf. also Lindemann: ‘Die christliche Gemeinde stellte sich dar als ein Modell für den Staat bzw. für die Gesellschaft als ganze’ (1985, 100).

⁶⁷ Discussing the culture of patriarchy in the first century, Bartchy claims that domination involved more than men dominating women. ‘In a wide variety of cultures, men are brought up to gain honor for themselves precisely by dominating as many others as they can, both men and women’. He states further, that across ‘all social classes, traditional male socialization programmed males to pursue a never-ending quest for greater honor and influence’ and that this ‘systemic quest for honor by competition among men’ resulted in the ‘domination of males by other males’ (2003, 136).

That the broader context, especially 5:18-21, must be kept in view is clear from the fact that much of the discussion in the *Haustafel* is not driven by this participle. Though structurally the *Haustafel* is subordinate to ὑποτασσόμενοι, a bulk of the discussion is taken up with instruction directed to those in positions of power, and nine of the 21 verses are directed toward the headship of husbands in relation to their wives.

The *Haustafel*, as it appears in Ephesians, is designed to make a number of vital points. First, in the New Humanity, vis-à-vis the present fallen age as perverted by the evil powers, there is order, which is evident from the participial phrase that provides the point of transition, ‘subordinating yourselves to one another’ (ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις) (5:21). Most scholars attempt to read this as a command for mutual submission.⁶⁸ On such a view the members in the three pairs—husbands/wives, parents/children and slaves/masters—are to submit mutually to one another. Such a reading coheres well with similar Pauline contexts, such as Philippians 2, where Paul exhorts his readers on the basis of the example of Jesus Christ, who gave up his life unto death in order to be exalted by God. In the same way, believers should consider each others’ needs more important than their own (Phil 2:4). On this scenario, the relationships delineated in the *Haustafel* detail the manner in which such a mutual submission ought to be carried out.

While such a reading makes good sense within this context and is quite attractive on a number of counts, it cannot be sustained for several reasons. First, the verb ὑποτάσσω means ‘to subordinate’, and points to a structure within society that involves a hierarchical ordering.⁶⁹ It does not have the more general meaning of ‘submitting’, in the sense of being considerate of others.⁷⁰ Some writers have noted this factor but claim that the reciprocal pronoun ἀλλήλοις overrides such a consideration and calls for mutuality.⁷¹ The writer’s expression here, however, is due to his having to refer to relationships within new creation

⁶⁸ Lincoln 1990, 365; Dudrey 1999, 40; Muddiman 2001, 256-57; Keener 1992, 157-72; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 243-44; Kitchen 1994, 99-100; Bouttier 1991, 236-37; Caird 1976, 87.

⁶⁹ Best 1998, 517.

⁷⁰ Perriman 1998, 53.

⁷¹ Yoder Neufeld 2002, 243.

communities, instead of toward outsiders. As the *Haustafel* unfolds, it is clear that the writer does not order the relationships along mutually submissive lines.⁷²

A more satisfying reading, for which we are arguing, is to view the *Haustafel* as aimed at counteracting the devastating effects of the powers upon human relationships and in transforming relationships within appropriate hierarchical structures. The solution that the author provides does not involve overthrowing such structures, but rather subjecting them to new creation dynamics so that relationships within the New Humanity take on a renewed character. In this context, then, he is not calling for mutual submission, but for the ordering of the New Humanity in such a way that subordination is part of the picture.⁷³

The *Haustafel* as it appears in Ephesians does not identify the corruption of the powers in patriarchy or hierarchicalism, but in the perversion of relationships by selfishness and greed, leading alternatively to domination and rebellion. As we will demonstrate below, the patriarchy that is advocated in Ephesians has its source in the character of God who is most clearly revealed in the self-giving Jesus, whose ‘headship’ is characterized by self-giving love for those for whom he is Lord and head. But this is neither a blanket endorsement of cultural norms nor a kind of social conservatism, for, as our discussion will demonstrate, the author is radically re-orienting how relationships are to be conceived.⁷⁴

A second point made by the *Haustafel* is that the New Humanity is ordered under the Lordship of Christ. This speaks to the chaotic and perverted situation as it exists because of the corruption of creation by the powers, which has its source in the powers’ rejection of their ‘modesty’ and having ‘claimed for themselves an

⁷² Sampley 1971, 117; Perriman 1998, 52-53.

⁷³ Perkins points to a contemporary example of mutuality operating alongside a hierarchical ordering within a community, citing 1QS 5:23-25: ‘each one obeys his fellow, junior under senior. And their spirit and their deeds must be tested year after year in order to upgrade one according to the extent of his insight and the perfection of his path . . . Each should reproach his fellow in truth, in meekness and in compassionate love’ (2000, 11:443).

⁷⁴ Contra Mußner, who claims that ‘Haustafeln nicht in Opposition gegen die heidnische Umwelt entwickelt worden sind’ (1982, 153). Further, Best is wrong to claim that ‘The advice of the household code echoes in large part what the better pagan moralists were saying and is in no sense revolutionary’ (1993, 85). It is outside the scope of this thesis to engage the debate over the writer’s ‘failure’ to call for the overturn of ancient patriarchal structures altogether—a discussion heavily freighted with unexamined historical and ethical assumptions and examples of gross anachronism (cf. Bartchy 2003, 140; Dunn 1996, 61; Lührmann 1980, 83-97; Dudrey 1999, 41). The contemporary hermeneutical issues of ecclesiastical appropriation of the *Haustafel* will be left to the side, as well (cf. Perriman 1998).

absolute value', in the words of J. H. Yoder.⁷⁵ The powers did not maintain their positions as stewards of creation, but rather ceased to recognize the sovereign lordship of the Most High God and proceeded to carve out corners of the cosmos for themselves, leading to the corruption of creation and the enslavement of humanity. In a renewal and restoration of the original creation, the New Humanity operates 'in the fear of Christ' (5:21), with both slaves and masters recognizing that they are ultimately accountable to their Lord Christ (6:9). This is reinforced by the very argument of Ephesians that has at its core the cosmic Lordship of Christ, and is further emphasized by the portrayal of God as the cosmic Paterfamilias (Eph 3:14-15) with 'all things' in heaven and earth ordered under God's ultimate authority.

Third, the model of headship and authority in the New Humanity follows that of God in Christ: self-giving and cruciform. One of the most remarkable features of the *Haustafel* in Ephesians is the extended discussion of husbands and how they are to follow Christ in loving and giving themselves up for their wives. It is striking that nothing in this context is mentioned about the husband controlling or manipulating his wife or controlling his children or those under his stewardship. This is in remarkable contrast to similar household codes from the ancient world, where the focus is on the right management of the household for the comfort and happiness of the husband/patriarch, with no thought given to a sacrificial lifestyle of the 'head' for the sake of other members of the household. Similarly, in Ephesians, parents are called upon to train and nurture their children. While these may sound like quite harmless commands to the modern ear, they are spoken in the context of the absolute power of the patriarch over his family, which frequently was abused or used heavy-handedly and harshly in the ancient world.

Fourth, those in positions of subordination are to be subordinate 'from the heart', and adopt a similar cruciformity. This is in contrast to survival strategies of manipulation that people in subservient positions might adopt in the face of horrible treatment at the hands of superiors. Thus, each level of the hierarchy—the entire New Humanity—reflects the character of Christ himself. That is, it reflects the character of the New Humanity as created 'according to God', and the cruciform example of Christ shapes the character of the entire new creation.

⁷⁵ Yoder 1994, 142.

Wives and Husbands

The first pair of relationships that the writer address is that of the husband and wife. Unlike contemporary household codes, the author first addresses the subordinate member of the pair, as he continues to do for the remaining pairs. Wives are to subordinate themselves to their husbands ‘as to the Lord’ (ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ) (5:22).⁷⁶ This command is based on the headship of the man in relation to his wife in the same way that Christ is the head of the church. He writes in vv. 23-24:

because (ὅτι) a man is head (κεφαλὴ)⁷⁷ of his wife as also Christ is head (κεφαλὴ) of the church, he is savior of the body; but as the church is subordinated (ὑποτάσσεται) to Christ, thus also the wives to their husbands in everything.

There are several striking differences between the author’s instruction to wives in this text and the *oikonomia* tradition in the ancient world. First, the instruction regarding wives in the *oikonomia* tradition was directed to men as the patriarch and wives were not addressed directly.⁷⁸ The entirely androcentric viewpoint of the *oikonomia* tradition supports our earlier contention that the contemporary household codes were given for the benefit of patriarchs in that they were advised in how to manage or control their households—wives included—for their own benefit and for a stable society. In contrast to this, the writer addresses wives directly, exhorting them to participate fully and willingly in the New Humanity.⁷⁹ He subverts the contemporary notion that the ordering of the household should be for the benefit of the patriarch or for those in power when he sets in parallel the ‘headship’ of the husband in relation to his wife and that of Christ in relation to the church (v. 23). The headship of Christ is characterized by his providing salvation for the church, recalling Christ’s giving himself to death for the salvation of the church. This is the kind of ‘headship’ the author has in

⁷⁶ The verb ὑποτάσσω does not appear here, but is understood from the appearance of the participle in v. 21 (Schlier 1971, 250).

⁷⁷ Perriman provides an alternative way of understanding the κεφαλὴ that gets beyond the entrenched and politically loaded debate between ‘source’ and ‘authority over’. He argues that κεφαλὴ has the basic sense of that which is ‘first, foremost, prominent or pre-eminent’, so that ‘to be “head” of a group of people simply means to occupy the position at the top or front’ (1998, 31). In contemporary Greek, the κεφαλὴ metaphor ‘appears essentially to be spatial or temporal, not hierarchical or organic’ (32, 50).

⁷⁸ Cf. Yoder 1994, 171-72.

⁷⁹ According to Bouttier, ‘La motivation est radicalisée par *comme au Seigneur*’ (1991, 242).

mind, so that those in subordinate positions in the New Humanity do not exist for the comfort of those at the top. Rather, those who have authority or power are to use it for the good, protection and nurture of those subordinate to them.⁸⁰

Second, the *oikonomia* tradition reflected the contemporary notion that the woman was constitutionally inferior to her husband. According to Aristotle, the woman is less rational than the man, which explains her subordination to him:

Hence there are by nature various classes of rulers and ruled. For the free rules the slave, the male the female, and the man the child in a different way. And all possess the various parts of the soul, but possess them in different ways; for the slave has not got the deliberative part at all, and the female has it, but without full authority, while the child has it, but in an undeveloped form (*Pol.* 1260a 9-14).⁸¹

Aristotle states that each of these different classes will display a different sort of virtue, and that of the woman is silence (*Pol.* 1260a 31).⁸²

Such a notion is completely absent from the *Haustafel* in Ephesians. Wives are not regarded as inferior nor as part of the household to be managed or manipulated for the happiness of the man in control. His discussion recognizes the cultural convention of the man ‘at the head’⁸³ of the household and he exhorts wives to subordinate themselves willingly to their husbands’ headship. The author accords dignity to women and wives, while denying that their subordinate position is based on any alleged inferiority. This is a further reflection of the ‘newness’ of the New Humanity and its distinction from the surrounding cultural patriarchy reflecting the fallen powers. In the New Humanity each person has dignity and is a valuable part of the new creation people of God.

A third difference is that the author patterns this relationship on that of Christ to the church, making it theologically rich and meaningful. The driving force of the *Haustafel* is not the comfort of the one at the head, nor is it a general quest for order *per se*. Rather, the goal of the New Humanity is to actualize effectively its identity as the household of God in Christ by the Spirit, reflecting

⁸⁰ Bartchy captures well the contrast here between the vision of headship in the *Haustafel* in Ephesians and that in the contemporary culture: He claims that ‘the aspect of God’s power that human beings should imitate must result in empowerment of others, which stands in striking contrast to the understanding of power on which every patriarchal system is based, namely, domination’ (2003, 137).

⁸¹ Balch 1981, 34-35.

⁸² Cf. also *Pol.* 1269b 12-1270a 15; V 1313b 33-36; 1314b 26; VI 1319b (Balch 1981, 36).

⁸³ Perriman 1998, 31.

the character of God in Christ in every way and at every level. Because of this, each person, whatever her position in the New Humanity hierarchy, is accorded dignity and honor and is given an appropriate motivation.

In the most extended portion of the *Haustafel*, the writer next addresses husbands (vv. 25-33). He commands husbands to love their wives ‘just as also (καθὼς καὶ) Christ loved (ἡγάπησεν) the church and gave himself up (παρέδωκεν) for her’ (v. 25). He sets Christ as the example for the husband/patriarch, who gave his life for the salvation of the church. This self-giving had the purity and dignity of the church as its motivation (vv. 26-27). Further, the author orders the husband/patriarch to love his wife as himself, seeking to care for her in her subordinate position in the same way that he would seek his own ease and comfort. This, too, is based on the relationship of Christ to the church as his body (vv. 28-30).

This instruction to the husband/patriarch is completely at odds with contemporary household codes and directly confronts the culture of domination fostered by the evil powers. First, husbands are commanded to ‘love’ their wives, a command that appears in no other contemporary household code.⁸⁴ As we noted above, the focus in the *oikonomia* tradition is on the proper ordering of household units by the patriarch for his own comfort and ease. Second, husbands are not to dominate their subordinate wives, but their love is to imitate the self-sacrificial love of Christ. As Schüssler Fiorenza notes, this radically reorients patriarchy according to the character of the lordship of Christ.⁸⁵ The author directly confronts the system of domination in the wider culture—fostered by the powers—where the great authority that is invested in patriarchs over their entire households was often exercised with conniving manipulation in the best of cases. Husbands are to resist the temptation to operate according to the Old Humanity, and not to take advantage of their position as the head, but rather to use the power of their position for the sake of their wives.

Third, the writer orders husbands to view their relationship to their wives along the same lines as the unity between Christ and the church. They are to see their wives as united to them and to care for them as their own bodies. This rules

⁸⁴ In reference to the command to husbands to love their wives, Schrage states that ‘es ist zugleich evident, daß das Verhalten der Christen im οἶκος nicht einfach der Konvention entspricht’ (1974, 13).

⁸⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 269-70.

out viewing wives as inferior, nor are they to be viewed as subordinates that can be manipulated for the husband's ease. Rather, in opposition to other household codes that would have provided for the husband's own ease or simply for order in the household, husbands must seek the best interests and dignity of their subordinate wives. Again, the example here is the *self-giving* Christ, not the one who seeks to dominate others in an effort to uphold one's own place.

While the author does not here call for the overthrow of patriarchy, he does indeed call for the relationship between husbands and wives to be oriented according to the New Humanity. This is a radical confrontation to the corruption and abuse in patriarchal systems found within the Old Humanity, which is oriented according to the character of the fallen powers.

Parents and Children

The writer again begins by addressing the subordinate member of this pair, as he exhorts children⁸⁶ to 'obey your parents in the Lord, for this is righteous (δίκαιον)' (6:1). That children would be addressed at all is extraordinary, since, like wives, children are not addressed in the *oikonomia* tradition, where the focus is on the patriarch subduing or establishing dominion over his children.⁸⁷ By commanding children regarding their subordinate role in the New Humanity, the author grants them dignity and affirms their valued position. Further, this instruction is not condescending, nor does it involve the claim that young children are inferior in any way. Rather, the writer motivates them by pointing out that this is the way of blessing from the Lord. By doing what is righteous—subordinating themselves to their parents, their authorities under the Lordship of Christ—they will receive the blessing that the Lord has promised.⁸⁸

The author sets 'fathers' (οἱ πατέρες) as the corresponding member of this middle pair, in a change from 'parents' (τοῖς γονεῦσιν) in 6:1, signaling that he is addressing the power and authority invested in patriarchs of households and

⁸⁶ The exhortation to τέκνα ('children') has children of all ages in view, both young and adult (Lincoln 1990, 403; Yoder Neufeld 2002, 269).

⁸⁷ Yoder 1994, 171-72.

⁸⁸ On the debated description of the command as 'the first command with a promise' (ἐντολὴ πρώτη ἐν ἐπαγγελίᾳ) (6:2), see Best 1998, 565-68; Schlier 1971, 281; Moritz 1996, 153-77.

the great potential for the abuse of such power.⁸⁹ Fathers are not here instructed to control their children to increase in family honor, nor to manipulate the direction or social trajectory of their lives. Rather, in a radical exhortation that is too often underappreciated, the author exhorts fathers, to avoid provoking their children to anger, and instead to ‘bring them up’ (ἐκτρέφετε) in the ‘discipline’ (παιδεία) and ‘instruction’ (νοουθεσία) of the Lord (6:4). This cryptic command is often viewed as too brief and only lightly touching on this vital household relationship.⁹⁰ Yet it is profound, in that this is a demand for fathers to act with a view to the best interests of their children. Further, it demands that the dignity and the desires of the children be considered, for provocation to anger would result from fathers frustrating the goals and desires of their children, acting only in the perceived best interest of family honor and exploiting the weaker position of their children. Instead of taking advantage of their powerful position, fathers must train their children in the way of the Lord, another reminder of the stewardship given to fathers and of their accountability to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Slaves and Masters

Besides exhortation to husbands, the instruction to slaves is the most extensive (6:5-8), which may reflect the large number of slaves in early Christian congregations. The situations faced by slaves had a wide range of possibilities, since some would have been quite well-trained, while others would have endured horrible treatment at the hands of their masters. Slaves were often thought of as property,⁹¹ and often were treated accordingly.⁹² Because of such treatment, the temptation to rebel against their masters would have been nearly overwhelming. Occasionally, such sentiments boiled over, causing massive slave rebellions, or incidences of slaves murdering their masters.⁹³ The instruction regarding slaves in

⁸⁹ Yoder Neufeld 2002, 269-70. The power of the *paterfamilias* across all traditions in the Greco-Roman world is well-attested. In Roman society, *patria potestas* gave great authority over children to the father, though by the first century it is likely that fathers could not put their children to death (Keener 2000, 357; cf. Lacey 1986, 121-44). Grown daughters and sons were usually still bound under their father’s authority until he died (Bartchy 2003, 136).

⁹⁰ Cf. Best 1998, 568.

⁹¹ Aristotle, *Eth. nic.* V 1134b 11.

⁹² On slavery in ancient Rome, see Bradley 1994; Garnsey 1996.

⁹³ Tacitus records the massive execution of slaves in the household of a Roman prefect who was murdered because of a homosexual rivalry (*Annals* 14.42-45). While the killer was identified, Roman law required that all the slaves in a household be put to death because of the presumption that all may have been involved in the plot. The case was debated in the Senate because of the great revulsion at the thought of executing over four thousand innocent slaves, but it

the *oikonomia* tradition was focused on the patriarch's domination and control of his slaves.⁹⁴

Into this situation, the writer exhorts slaves to be obedient to their masters and to serve them as 'slaves of Christ, doing the will of God in sincerity' (ἐκ ψυχῆς) (v. 6). Again, the *Haustafel* is unique in that it directly addresses slaves, granting them a dignified and proper place in the New Humanity. They are not told to submit to their masters out of concern for mere survival or the smooth running of society, but to cultivate an eschatological focus, doing good to their masters with the knowledge that 'the Lord' (κυρίου) will reward the good that is done to all, 'whether slave or free' (εἴτε δοῦλος εἴτε ἐλεύθερος) (v. 8).

The author finally addresses the masters (οἱ κύριοι) of slaves in v. 9. His instruction is brief, but this may be because of the extended instruction previously directed to husbands/patriarchs. Further, it is likely that the exhortation to 'do the same things to them (i.e., to slaves)' (τὰ αὐτὰ ποιεῖτε πρὸς αὐτοῖς) in v. 9 is an exhortation to slave-masters to treat their slaves in such a way that reflects their recognition of the Lordship of Christ and the eschatological judgment based on deeds, irrespective of social rank.⁹⁵ The writer calls to mind the impartiality of God explicitly, commanding masters to 'give up threatening' (ἀνιέντες τὴν ἀπειλήν), knowing that they have the same Lord in heaven who does not show favoritism (v. 9b).⁹⁶

This is a similarly radical challenge to the manner in which slaves were treated in the first century, and a departure from the *oikonomia* tradition.⁹⁷ The temptation to dominate slaves and keep them oppressed would have been great, especially since slave rebellions would have been a constant threat, with slave populations being quite large in many cities.⁹⁸ According to a proverb attributed

was decided that all the slaves and their families, including women and children, must be put to death so as to discourage any future rebellion (Dudrey 1999, 30-31).

⁹⁴ Keener 2000, 363-64.

⁹⁵ Hoehner 2002, 815; Best 1998, 580; Schnackenburg 1991, 265. Some writers cite this instruction here as evidence that the *Haustafel* has to do with mutual submission, so that the command here has in view the masters making themselves servants to their slaves (cf. Bauckham 2002, 126; Kitchen 1994, 110).

⁹⁶ Bouttier 1991, 255.

⁹⁷ According to Aristotle, 'The relation of master to slaves is also tyrannic, since in it the master's interest is aimed at. The autocracy of a master appears to be right . . .' (*Eth. nic.* VIII 1160b 23).

⁹⁸ Dudrey 1999, 30.

to Diodorus Siculus, ‘every slave we own is an enemy we harbor’.⁹⁹ Because of this great temptation to mistreat household slaves, or to view them with extreme suspicion, the author’s command is neither cryptic nor merely obligatory, but rather a stern call, consistent with his exhortations to patriarchs and fathers, to recognize the Lordship of Christ, and that authority over another person is not an opportunity for exploitation or manipulation, but rather a stewardship—a responsibility to protect, provide for and treat with dignity, another person who is also under the Lordship of Christ.

Conclusion

We had aimed at demonstrating that Eph 4:17-6:9—typically known as the ‘ethical’ portion of Ephesians—is not only internally coherent, but also integrally connected with the first half of the letter. We have previously argued that Eph 1:20-4:16 does not have to do with laying out the broad contours of a ‘Pauline theology’, but rather announces and defends the cosmic Lordship of Christ over the powers ruling the present evil age. This more nuanced understanding of the author’s argument in the first half of the letter opens up a more fruitful reading of the second half. Rather than laying out a bland, disconnected and random collection of Pauline ethical injunctions, Eph 4:17-6:9 elucidates the implications of the Lordship of Christ for his people, the church, and their commission to epitomize the triumph of God in Christ in their corporate life together.

⁹⁹ Dudrey 1999, 30.

CONCLUSION

In drawing this study to a close, we must note some of the contributions this thesis makes to Ephesians and Pauline scholarship, and, more broadly, NT studies. We have presented a case for the presence of an argument in Ephesians. As we noted in the introduction to this thesis, Ephesians has suffered from relative neglect at the hands of NT scholars, not only because it is seen as post-Pauline, but also because it is regarded, for the most part, as not polemically focused in any significant way. We have argued that Ephesians polemically asserts the triumph of God in Christ over all competing cosmic forces.

Reading Ephesians through the lens of divine warfare allows the argument to emerge into plain view, being confirmed by the *inclusio* formed by the phrase ‘the power of his strength’, repeated in 1:19 (τοῦ κράτους τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ) and 6:10 (τῷ κρᾶτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ). The argument involves the proclamation and defense of the cosmic Lordship of Christ over the powers and authorities that rule the present evil age. This claim is vindicated by a rehearsal of the triumphs of God in Christ, and the manner in which the church is to participate in this triumph is exemplified by Paul in his depicted state of imprisonment and then outlined clearly in Eph 4:17-6:9.

We also noted how this reading provides satisfying solutions to several long-standing interpretive problems. First, scholars recognize that Ephesians 2 is the heart of the letter—both theologically and rhetorically—but there is little or no agreement as to how it actually functions in the letter, or even what its flow of thought is. We have argued in chapter 3 that this passage contains a nearly complete pattern of divine warfare, in that, within a context of praise and worship (1:1-19), the author asserts the cosmic lordship of Christ and then defends this claim by laying out his victories over his enemies.

Second, interpreters have puzzled over what to make of the digression in Eph 3:2-13. While some claim that this amounts to a defense of Paul’s apostleship or a recounting of how he was made an apostle, we have argued that the author is here explaining how Paul’s imprisonment may be understood as an epitome of the triumph of God in Christ, wherein Paul’s ministry as the administrator of the grace of God on earth is unhindered by his suffering defeat at the hands of the powers over which Christ has been exalted as Lord. The

emergence of the church into existence by the proclamation of Paul *the prisoner* serves notice to the powers and authorities that God has triumphed over them in Christ and that their day of ultimate judgment is approaching.

A third stubborn interpretive problem that this reading resolves is the quotation of Psalm 68 in Eph 4:8. Psalm 68:18 portrays Yahweh receiving gifts from men, but in the quotation in Ephesians, the verb ‘receive’ has been changed to ‘give’, a problem that one commentator has recently noted has no satisfactory solution. I have argued that the author is doing more than citing merely one verse within the psalm in order to provide his Scriptural warrant, nor is his citation of this passage ‘mistaken’, as another commentator maintains. He is, rather, appealing to the narrative movement of the entire psalm, which depicts the victorious Yahweh ascending his throne and blessing his people. The author, then, portrays Christ as the victorious divine warrior who has the right to give gifts to his people because of his triumphs.

Fourth, reading Ephesians through the lens of divine warfare allows the integral coherence of the two halves of the letter to emerge. The manner in which Ephesians holds together is difficult to detect, with some scholars claiming that its coherence is found only on a rhetorical basis. We have argued, however, that in Eph 4:17-6:9, the author exhorts believers to embody the triumph of God in Christ by engaging in divine warfare against the powers and authorities that rule the present evil age. Ephesians portrays two spheres within reality—the Old Humanity and the New Humanity—that are in conflict with each other, and calls for new creation communities to operate according to the New Humanity while resisting the forces of the evil powers that threaten such new creation life. The warfare of the church is founded upon the triumph of God in Christ outlined in Eph 1:20-2:22, modelled after the paradoxical triumph epitomized by Paul the prisoner in Eph 3:2-13, and enabled by the gifts of the triumphant warrior Christ in Eph 4:1-16.

Our reading of Ephesians also has implications for related areas of Ephesians and Pauline studies, as well as for the broader field of NT studies. First, the place of Ephesians in relation to the undisputed Pauline epistles must be revisited. As we noted, Ephesians is currently regarded as a pastiche of Pauline traditional and theological fragments woven together by a second-generation disciple. This view is reinforced by the notion that the letter contains no clear line

of argument and has no polemical thrust. If, however, it is demonstrated that Ephesians contains a clearly delineated structure and has a tightly woven argument, then this consensus must be re-examined and re-evaluated.

This plea is strengthened by recent work in Pauline theology that has emphasized (1) the necessity of reading his letters within an apocalyptic conceptual framework, and (2) the centrality of the Lordship of Christ in Paul's thought, while (only slightly) marginalizing justification by faith. Some object to the Pauline authorship of Ephesians because of the absence of 'justification' language in the well-known statement about salvation apart from works in Eph 2:8-10. Yet if the proclamation of the Lordship of Christ and his triumph over the evil powers within an apocalyptic view of reality is the essence of Pauline thought, then Ephesians resonates with that central impulse. It is also worth mentioning that the criteria for judging the authenticity of the Pauline epistles is notoriously unstable, differing from scholar to scholar, such that the grounds on which Ephesians typically is excluded from the undisputed Paulines would also exclude certain of the accepted epistles, such as Philippians and 1 Corinthians.

Second, and more broadly, this thesis will provide valuable material for those seeking to discern the connection between Pauline proclamation and the Roman imperial cult. Reading Ephesians through the ideology of divine warfare so that the proclamation of the triumph of God in Christ is at its center provides several points of contact. Most obviously, the imperial cult also utilized the ideology of divine warfare to assert the universal sovereignty of Caesar. The emperor was the one who provided for the peace and stability of the empire, the one who had conquered the forces of chaos, earning the right to be known as the imperial savior. In the face of such claims, Paul asserts the cosmic lordship of Christ, who has triumphed over his enemies and has achieved peace (Eph 2:14). In opposition to the notion that it is the emperor, as *pater patriae*, who provides for the stability and right ordering of society, Paul claims that God (the cosmic *paterfamilias*, Eph 3:14-15) in Christ has created and properly orders the New Humanity, which is delineated via the convention of the 'household code' in Eph 5:22-6:9. Further, this New Humanity is set up in opposition to the functioning of Roman society, where honor is passed up the hierarchy so that those on the bottom serve and honor those above them, with the emperor at the top, receiving honor befitting his divine status. In the New Humanity, this hierarchy is turned on

its head, so that those at the top treat their subordinates with respect and dignity and honor, since the Lord to whom all in the New Humanity are accountable is himself a servant who self-sacrificially gives himself for the sake of those under his rule (Eph 5:25).

These points of contact combine for a polemic on the part of the supreme Lordship of Christ over all competing powers and could be read as having Caesar and the imperial cult in view. At the very least, those who heard this letter read in the context of the Roman empire would have heard references to Caesar in Paul's claim that Christ is exalted far above the powers and authorities.

Finally, it is appropriate at this point to reflect upon the theological commitment to divine triumph in Ephesians and how this rhetoric might be used to subvert unjust discourse of triumph over the marginalized in today's world. It cannot be denied that the letter of Ephesians has a questionable history in this regard. It has been used more often throughout the history of the Christian church in a triumphalist manner in efforts to exploit the weak than to bring hope to the marginalized. The most prominent example is the use of Ephesians 5 to support the exploitation and subordination of women. According to Virginia Mollenkott, writing in *A Feminist Companion to the Deutero-Pauline Epistles*,

the interpretive history of Ephesians 5 is a bloody one, and the passage is still a matter of life and death to Christian women and children who face abuse in right-wing environments. I have neither the space nor the stomach to trace the devastating misogyny of church fathers and theologians through the centuries.¹

The rhetoric of the triumph of God in Christ in Ephesians is designed to meet such exploitative power-plays directly and to subvert them. Ephesians portrays the exploitative use of power as a manifestation of the present evil age that is going down to destruction. To use positions of power and authority to gain advantage over the marginalized is to imitate the pattern of behaviour typical of the fallen evil powers. In contrast to such patterns of abuse and marginalization, the new humanity that Ephesians calls for is governed by the Lord Christ, ruler of the cosmos. His rule is one of love and self-sacrifice on behalf of others, and his cosmic reign is most clearly manifest in his reconciling aliens and strangers, bringing them into the very centre of the work of God in the world.

¹ Mollenkott 2003, 39.

Further, the triumph of Christ was accomplished in his death and validated by God in his resurrection. Christian existence that is faithful to God in Christ, therefore, must be explicitly *cruciform*, so that the social life of Christian communities takes the shape of death and resurrection. The exhortatory portions of Ephesians make clear how Christian churches are to implement such community life—by living self-sacrificially loving lives. Such cruciform existence must be modelled primarily by those with maximal social capital in churches—particularly men (husbands and fathers) and Christian leaders. We had argued that this is the thrust of the digression in Ephesians 3, demonstrating that God in Christ is most magnified in the cosmos—and his triumph over the fallen powers is most clearly seen—when those in positions of ecclesiastical authority purposefully content themselves to inhabit positions of social shame and dishonour. Sadly, since it is embedded in such a power-hungry culture, Western Christianity has given way to triumphalism in this regard, failing to grasp the central impulse of the divine warfare tradition of which Ephesians consciously partakes—that the power of God is demonstrated most clearly in human agents that utterly lack credentials or are seen to be weak.

Ephesians provides strong hints that those with maximal social capital are most responsible to humble themselves by epitomizing the kind of love that husbands are to have for their wives in the self-emptying of Christ and his sacrificial love for the church. Further, the amount of instruction given to husbands here in Ephesians 5 is out of all proportion to the commands given to wives. While many focus their attention on the command for wives to be subject to husbands in Eph 5:22, the husband, or patriarch, receives far more attention in this extended passage, and the standard by which husbands' love for their wives will be measured is an exacting one. This is indeed remarkable when compared with similar household codes from the ancient world. As Elna Mouton notes,

[i]n contrast to the often abusive power of contemporary authorities, the essence of God's power is defined in terms of loving care and concern for people, and particularly by God's restoring what was lost to them, namely, their dignity and humanity.²

² Mouton 2003, 69.

These same liberative impulses may be appropriated more broadly as the Christian church proclaims the liberating good news that God in Christ has come to free God's creation from the fallen powers that hold it in captivity. In our most immediate situation in the West, the Christian church is often complicit in the erection of barriers between Christian and Muslim. This situation is exactly that which is depicted in Ephesians 2:11-12—the rule of the fallen powers over this present evil age is manifest in their having divided up humanity and fostered animosity between groups. The increase and hardening of 'in-group/out-group' rhetoric has led to American Christians embracing their identity *as Americans* far more profoundly than their identity as followers of the crucified and resurrected Christ. This is re-affirmed and reinforced by the rhetoric of the triumph of American ideals and the 'liberation' of heretofore oppressed peoples and nations.

The rhetoric of triumph in Ephesians is designed to subvert such discourse. It constitutes a call to refuse to embrace one's national identity at a fundamental level in efforts to exploit or gain advantage over others. To fully embrace identity in Christ is to recognize that his triumph is manifest in his uniting disparate groups of humanity in himself and to actively work to redeem relationships and work for the liberation and dignity of the marginalized at every opportunity. According to Ephesians, to foster division through promotion and cultivation of group identities other than identity with the 'new humanity' in Christ, is to seek to advance the rule of the fallen powers over the present evil age. To welcome and work for the dignity and honour of the marginalized is to make manifest that Christ is indeed Cosmic Lord over all powers and authorities and that the new age in Christ has indeed come in power.

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